A HANDFUL OF STORIES

EDITED WITH NOTES AND INTRODUCTION

By

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PREFACE

This selection of short stories is meant for Intermediate students. The aim, throughout, has been to select stories which should not only be within their comprehension but should also appeal to their tastes and interests.

The objection can easily be raised , "Why not this, that and the other?" We have no reply to this. In a world where "if all the short stories published in a year were set out in a single line, they would stretch from Fleet Street to Mars," let alone those which are written and rejected, the editor's task is stupendous. Ours, however, has been considerably less so, because we were limited by our aim. We could exclude most of the stories, however good, on the score of their theme, their style or their length. Within that limit, however, we have tried to provide both variety and freshness. From the pure fantasy of *The Magic Shop* to the grim reality of *Korney Vasiliev* is a vast range of subject-matter.

Most of the authors chosen are well-known, but effort has been made to exclude the hackneyed stories which, though excellent in themselves, have become stale by repitition.

It was not fair to exclude the dialect altogether and thus to deprive the students of its delightful juice.

We have, therefore, included *A Harlem Tragedy* by O. Henry, which they will find easy to understand and appreciate.

Our aim, in the selection of stories as well as in the Introduction and Notes, has been to create in our readers an intelligent appreciation for stories in general and further to sharpen their appetite for more stories. In stead of giving abstract, high-sounding criticism, much beyond the comprehension of students, we have given a few simple hints, and illustrated them from the stories they have read. Here and there we have also mentioned the names of books and, at places, even of stories which they should read if they feel interested.

We can only hope that we have succeeded in our aim, to however small extent.

INTRODUCTION

A short story should be a 'story' and it should be 'short'. By story we mean that it should have a plot. Volumes have been written to discuss what a plot is since Aristotle wrote his famous treatise. All we can say here is that a plot is not merely a sequence of events, however interesting in themselves. It is a planned sequence. The events must have a logical link and a goal in view. They must interact on each other and on the characters. They must have a design and a sense of proportion. They should move not in a straight line, but in a circle, so to say. They should follow each other not merely as a sequence, but as a consequence, not merely 'after this,' but 'because of this'. Mr. Foster has given a very interesting example. When we say "The queen died and a week later the king died," we are talking of two separate unconnected events that happen one after the other. But when we say, "The queen died and a week later the king died of grief," we at once enter into the domain of plot. The two words, 'of grief,' add a great deal to the story. They indicate that the two events are strongly linked; one happens as a result of the other. They also indicate how sensitive the king is and what great love he has for the queen. An incident has not only reacted on the

character, but has also revealed it.

The reaction of incident on character and *vice versa* and of environments on both is the essence of a plot. It leads to conflict and its resolution. It gives a feeling of suspense and of anxiey about the outcome of the conflict. There can no plot worth the name without some kind of struggle.

It may be the struggle between two characters, as in *The Salt Inspector* where Munshi Vanshi Dhar and Pandit Alopi Din are ranged against each other and win alternate victories. In *The Story-teller*, the struggle is first between the 'don'ts' of the aunt and the 'how and why' of the nephews and then between the aunt and the stranger to keep the children quiet. *The Bet* relates the struggle between the banker and the lawyer. In *A Harlem Tragedy*, there is the struggle between the wife who longs for a licking from her husband and the husband who is "too much of a gentleman to raise his hand against me." Chang's struggle, like Romeo's and Othello's, is against the parents of his beloved; Corney's, like Othello's again, against his wife whom be suspects of infidelity.

The struggle may be between the character and the environments. Iswaran cannot pass the Intermediate Examination. The whole town including his own parents, is unsympathetic towards him. They imagine that he is a 'thick-skinned idiot,' little knowing that behind the mask that he has been assuming,

resides an extremely sensitive heart, "hopelessly seared by failure, desperately longing and praying for success." That is the cause of most tragedy—the character cannot fit in well with the circumstances. Place him somewhere else or place some one else in his situation and there would no tragedy.

Madame Loisel has charm and beauty combined with an aristocratic temperament. She is married to a clerk and has no occasion to gratify her tastes. She feels miserable. She feels more miserable when she loses the borrowed neck-lace. Her life is all a struggle against environments over which she has no control. The lawyer in *The Bet* faces fifteen years of extremely hard struggle against solitary confinement and passes through tragic phases. *A Harlem Tragedy* illustrates the struggle between Mrs. Fink and her neighbourhood, where Mrs. Cassidy gets kicks and, after kicks, kisses from her husband and enjoys both. Mrs. Fink starts envying her. She is otherwise leading a quiet and contented life. She would perhaps be happy if she did not notice the weekly hot quarrels and hotter reconciliations of her friend.

Lastly there may be the more psychological, the more artistic struggle within the mind of the character —between two conflicting emotions or loyalties. That is the struggle of the poet in *My Fair Neighbour*—to express or not to express his feelings for the widow. That is the puzzling struggle of the princess in *The Lady or the Tiger?*—whether to throw her lover into

the jaws of a hungry tiger or into the arms of a beautiful lady. Chang Po is faced with a still more artistic situation. He has to decide between art and life, whether he should conceal his identity by suppressing his art or whether he should express himself and thus endanger his own life and that of his wife and child. The artist wins victory over the man and the tragedy follows.

Next to struggle is the element of surprise that makes a plot artistic. The greatest master in that field, among our authors, is of course O. Henry, who gives a sudden twist to his stories at the end. Mrs. Fink, after she has "caught him again in the jaw, with a wide swing of her other hand," shuts her eyes expecting joyfully a well-delivered blow from her husband. Her friend, Mrs. Cassidy, hears the shuffling and stumbling in her room and runs up breathlessly to enquire, "Did he? oh, did he?" The reply comes in the last lines, "He—he never touched me, and—he's—oh, gawd—he's washin' the clothes—he's washin' the clothes."

There is equally great surprise in Maupassant's story. After ten years of poverty and privation to pay off the price of the diamond neck-lace, after losing all her beauty and charm and zest of life, Madame Loisel is told, again in the last lines of the story, that the necklace was not of real but of imitation diamonds, costing not thirty-six thousand but "at the very most

five hundred francs".

There is not less surprise in *My Fair Neighbour*, when the poet learns at the end, to his utmost dismay, that his poems have won for Nabin the very widow whom he has been worshipping all along.

There is surprise in *The Salt Inspector* when, after being dismissed for honesty, Munshi Vanshi Dhar has lost all joy of life and returns home depressed. All of sudden, Pandit Alopi Din, out of remorse or more probably out of business acumen, comes, apologises and offers to make him the manager of all his property.

There is a surprise for the banker when he enters the lawyer's prison to murder him in order to escape the bet and finds that the lawyers has already renounced his claim in writing.

The Magic Shop is full of surprises, though of a different kind.

It is customary to distinguish plot from character. We could subscribe to that distinction if we were looking for good and bad or dull and interesting characters in a story. Character cannot live, move and have its being in a vacuum. There is no abstract virtue or vice. It takes its colouring from actions and more than that, from environments. If we were looking for a 'proper' story like the aunt in *The Story-teller*, we might hunt up saintly characters divorced from their surroundings. But neither children nor adults would

read or listen to such a story, as the aunt learnt to her cost. What we look for in a story is not saints or sinners, but men and women—how they act and react in certain situations. It is their human, not their moral qualities that interest us in art and their human qualities are brought out in the setting in which they are placed. Remove them elsewhere and their reactions change. Tragedy is turned into comedy. Plot without character and their mutual interaction becomes a series of unorganised, unplanned incidents. Character without plot becomes a static figure, lifeless and insipid. A great artist is not interested in moral qualities. His soul is as big as the universe and embraces the whole humanity. There are no prejudices or preconceptions in it. He reads and interprets with equal sympathy the minds of the prince and of the peasant, of the hero and of the villain. He does not judge them; he just places them in certain situations and makes them talk and act to reveal their personality. Who can tell whether Prem Chand loves Vanshi Dhar because he is honest and hates Alopi Din because he is not? Is Tagore angry with Nabin, because he gets what his friend deserves? Shall we ever know what Maupassant thinks of Madame Loisel? He has just placed a certain type of woman in a certain set of circumstances and exhibited her reactions. 'What would have happened if she had never lost, these jewels? Who knows? Who knows? How strange life is, how fickle! How little

is needed to ruin or save!" That is Maupassant's interest—the problem and not the solution of life, the reaction and not the virtue of the character. Are we sure that O. Henry used to thrash his wife, because he has shown in his story that Cassidys were happy with that kind of life. Further, are we sure that even Mrs. Fink would have been happy if her husband had started beating her as she so ardently desired. Mrs. Fink is not Mrs. Cassidy. That we have to realise in all our reading of stories. Characters, actions and environments act and react on each other and form indissoluble parts of the plot.

A short story, we said, should be 'short'. It should have a single situation and very few characters. It should have economy and directness. It cannot brook digression, discussion, discursiveness or diffuseness. It needs no padding or word-painting. Every part should be relevant and to the point. Every word, every phrase should take the story forward. Here is an illustration. A thief is climbing the stairs. "The carpet on the floor helped, the pictures on the wall hindered, his progress". These fourteen simple words reveal so much by suggestion. The owner of the house is not only rich, but very artistic; so also, curiously enough, is the thief. It is a peculiar kind of theft that we are made to expect.

A short story should start straightaway, without unnecessary introduction. Read any of the stories in

this book and you will feel that. The very first story, for instance, in its very first sentence introduces us to the excitement of the university results. Again, in the very first sentence, Tagore gives us an idea of the poet's feelings for his fair neighbour. "She was one of those pretty and charming girls etc....."—thus begins *The Necklace*. "Mrs. Fink has dropped into Mrs. Cassidy's flat" is the first sentence of O. Henry's story. It is useless to stress the obvious. Direct dramatic beginning conduces to intensity of concentration and grips the attention immediately.

The aim of short story, more than of any other form of literature, is unity of effect. It should have a singleness of purpose, where all details are merged in the whole. Action, character, dialogue—all should converge to the single aim. In a short story, says Hugh Walpole, "unity of impression is the end and the manipulation of the matter in hand, the means".

It will be a good exercise for the reader to judge the stories in this selection, from that standard. All that is said and done in *Iswaran* prepares us for the final tragedy. *The Story-teller*, throughout, has the single aim of illustrating how the child-mind revolts against taboos and tangible moral instructions..... and so on.

We have given a few characteristics of a short story without defining it. To define a short story would be to ignore the rich variety of its content and

form. Its content is as vast and varied as life itself. The horror of the supernatural, the excitement of adventure, the intrigue and suspense of mystery, the tragic irony of character caught in inevitable circumstances, the thrill and poignancy of love, the geniality of humour, strange places, fascinating persons, hair-raising experiences—anything can be the theme of a story.

If the themes are so varied, so are the tastes of the readers. No two person agree in their choice of stories. The writers themselves have different aims. If Bates says, "I have never, from the first, had the slightest interest in plots," O. Henry is of the opinion that 'plots are almost everything.' To define a form of art which is as infinite as life appears to be futile. Definitions, nevertheless, have been attempted. Here is one by Somerset Maugham, himself a great writer of short stories. "A good short story," he says, "is a piece of fiction, dealing with a single incident, material or spiritual, that can be read at a sitting; it is original, it must sparkle, excite, or impress; it must have unity of effect and impression; it should move in an even line for its exposition to its close." Legal thoroughness has been attempted here—with what success, we shall leave our readers to judge.

We have given the essentials of a short story. What makes a story great is the next question.

A great short story must have some significance,

which of course does not necessarily mean ethical value. It should have human interest. It should be a reflection of life—its manners and morals, national character and aspirations, insight into human psychology. It should have what Henry Seidel Canby calls "specific gravity." It should not be just insignificant stuff, however interesting. It should deal with human values. In a great story, however light its tone, however trivial its theme, we should feel that an interesting mind and temperament has made contact with life. We should gain an insight into human character, widen our knowledge of life and broaden our emotional reactions.

But that does not mean that it should be philosophy or propaganda. It should be a work of art before it is a lesson in morals. It should be aesthetics before it is ethics. It should give delight before it gives instruction.

ISWARAN

R. K. Narayan

When the whole of the student world in Malagudi was convulsed with excitement, on a certain evening in June when the Intermediate Examination results were being expected, Iswaran went about his business, looking very unconcerned and detached.

He had earned the reputation of having aged in the Intermediate Class. He entered the Intermediate Class in Albert Mission College as a youngster, with faint down on his upper lip. Now he was still there, his figure had grown brawny and athletic, and his chin had become tanned and leathery. Some people even said that you could see grey hairs on his head. The first time when he failed, his parents sympathised with him, the second time also he managed to get their sympathies, and subsequently they grew more critical and unsparing, and after repeated failures they lost all interest in his examination. He was often told by his parents, "Why don't you discontinue your studies, and try to do something useful?" He always pleaded, "Let me have this one last chance." He clung to university education with a ferocious devotion.

And now the whole town was agog with the expectation of the results in the evening. Boys moved about the street in groups; and on the sand of Sarayu they sat in clusters, nervously smiling and biting their finger nails. Others hung about the gates of the Senate Hall staring anxiously at the walls behind which a meeting was going on.

As much as the boys, if not more, the parents were agitated, except Iswaran's, who, when they heard their neighbours discussing their son's possible future results, remarked with a sigh: "No such worry for Iswaran. His results are famous and known to everyone in advance." Iswaran said facetiously, "I have, perhaps, passed this time, father, who knows? I did study quite hard."

"You are the greatest optimist in India at the moment; but for this obstinate hope you would never have appeared for the same examination every year."

"I failed only in Logic, very narrowly, last year," he defended himself. At which the whole family laughed. "In any case, why don't you go and wait along with the other boys, and look up your results?" his mother asked. "Not at all necessary," Iswaran replied. "If I pass they will bring home the news. Do you think I saw my results last year? I spent my time in a cinema. I sat through two shows consecutively."

He hummed as he went in for a wash before dressing to go out. He combed his hair with deliberate care, the more so because he knew everybody looked on him as a sort of an outcast for failing so often. He knew that behind him the whole family and the town were laughing. He felt that they remarked among themselves that washing, combing his hair, and putting on a well-ironed coat, were luxuries too far

above his state. He was a failure and had no right to such luxuries. He was treated as a sort of thick-skinned idiot. But he did not care. He answered their attitude by behaving like a desperado. He swung his arms, strode up and down, dragged and shouted, and went to a cinema. But all this was only a mask. Under it was a creature hopelessly seared by failure, desperately longing and praying for success. On the day of the results he was, inwardly, in a trembling suspense. "Mother," he said as he went out, "don't expect me for dinner tonight. I will eat something in a hotel and sit through both the shows at the Palace Talkies."

Emerging from Vinayak Street, he saw a group of boys moving up the Market Road towards the College. Someone asked: "Iswaran, coming up to see the results—?"

"Yes, yes, presently. But now I have to be going on an urgent business."

"Where?"

"Palace Talkies." At this all the boys laughed.

"You seem to know your result already. Do you?"

"I do. Otherwise do you think I would be celebrating it with a picture?"

"What is your number?"

"Seven Eight Five," he said, giving the first set of numbers that came to his head. The group passed on joking: "We know you are going to get a first-

class this time."

He sat in a far-off corner in the four-anna class. He looked about: not a single student in the whole theatre. All the students of the town were near the Senate House, waiting for their results. Iswaran felt very unhappy to be the only student in the whole theatre. Somehow fate seemed to have isolated him from his fellow-beings in every respect. He felt very depressed and unhappy. He felt an utter distaste for himself.

Soon the lights went out and the show started—a Tamil film with all the known gods in it. He soon lost himself in the politics and struggles of gods and goddesses; he sat rapt in the vision of a heavenly world which some film director had chosen to present. This felicity of forgetfulness lasted but half an hour. Soon the heroine of the story sat on a low branch of a tree in paradise and wouldn't move out of the place. She sat there singing a song for over half an hour. This portion tired Iswaran, and now there returned all the old pains and gloom. "Oh, lady," Iswaran appealed. "Don't add to my troubles, please move on." As if she heard this appeal the lady moved off, and brighter things followed. A battle, a deluge, somebody dropping headlong from cloudland, and somebody coming up from the bed of an ocean, a rain of fire, a rain of flowers, people dying, people rising from graves, and so on. All kinds of thrills occured

on that white screen beyond the pall of tobacco smoke. The continuous babble on and off the screen, music and shouting, the cry of pedlars selling soda, the unrestrained comments of the spectators—all this din and commotion helped Iswaran to forget the Senate House and student life for a few hours.

The show ended at ten o'clock in the night. A crowd was waiting at the gate for the night show. Iswaran walked across to "Ananda Bhavan"—a restaurant opposite to the Palace Talkies. The proprietor, a genial Bombay man, was a friend of his and cried: "Iswar Sab, the results were announced today. What about yours?"

"I did not write any examination this year," Iswaran said.

"Why, why, I thought you did pay your examination fees!"

Iswaran laughed. "You are right. I have passed my Intermediate just this evening."

"Ah, how very good. How clever you must be! If you pray to Hanuman he will always bring you success. What are you going to do next?"

"I will go to a higher class, that is all," Iswaran said. He ordered a few titbits and coffee and rose to go. As he paid his bill and walked out, the hotel proprietor said, "Don't leave me out when you are giving a dinner to celebrate your success."

Iswaran again purchased a ticket and went back

to the picture. Once more all the strifes and struggles and intrigues of gods were repeated before him. He was once again lost in it. When he saw on the screen some young men of his age singing as they sported in the waters of some distant heaven, he said "Well might you do it, boys. I suppose you have no examination where you are ...." And he was seized with a longing to belong to that world.

Now the leading lady sat on the low branch of a tree and started singing and Iswaran lost interest in the picture. He looked about for the first time. He noticed, in the semi-darkness, several groups of boys in the hall—happy groups. He knew that they must all have seen their results, and come now to celebrate their success. There were at least fifty. He knew that they must be happy and gay lot, with their lips red with chewing betel leaves. He knew that all of them would focus their attention on him the moment lights went up. They would all rag him about his results—all the old tedious joking over again, and all the tiresome pose of a desperado. He felt thoroughly sick of the whole business. He would not stand any more of it—the mirthful faces of these men of success and their leer. He was certain they would all look on him with the feeling that he had no business to seek the pleasure of a picture on that day.

He moved on to a more obscure corner of the hall. He looked at the screen, nothing there to cheer

him: the leading lady was still there, and he knew she would certainly stay there for the next twenty minutes singing her masterpiece..... He was overcome with dejection. He rose, silently edged towards the exit and was out of the theatre in a moment. He felt a loathing for himself after seeing those successful boys. "I am not fit to live. A fellow who cannot pass an examination....." This idea developed in his mind—a glorious solution to all difficulties. Die and go to a world where there were young men free from examination who sported in lotus pools in paradise. No bothers, no disgusting Senate House wall to gaze on hopelessly, year after year. This solution suddenly brought him a feeling of relief. He felt lighter. He walked across to the hotel. The hotel man was about to rise and go to bed. "Saitji," Iswaran said. "Please forgive my troubling you now. Give me a piece of paper and pencil. I have to note down something urgently." "So late as this," said the hotel man and gave him a slip of paper and a pencil stub. Iswaran wrote down a message for his father, folded the slip, and placed it carefully in the inner pocket of his coat.

He returned the pencil and stepped out of the hotel. He had only the stretch of the Race Course Road, and turning to his right, half the Market Road to traverse, and then Ellaman Street, and then Sarayu. ..... Its dark swirling waters would close on him

and end all his miseries. "I must leave this letter in my coat pocket and remember to leave my coat on the river step," he told himself.

He was soon out of Ellaman Street. His feet ploughed through the sands of the river bank. He came to the river steps, removed his coat briskly, and went down the steps. "Oh, God," he muttered with folded hands, looking up at his stars. "If I can't pass an examination even with a tenth attempt, what is the use of my living and disgracing the world?" His feet were in water. He looked over his shoulder at the cluster of university buildings. There was a light burning in the porch of the Senate House. It was nearing midnight. It was a quarter of an hour's walk. Why not walk across and take a last look at the results board? In any case he was going to die, and why should he shirk and tremble before the board?

He came out of the water and went up the steps, leaving his coat behind, and he walked across the sand. Somewhere a time gong struck twelve, stars sparkled overhead, the river flowed on with a murmur; and miscellaneous night sounds emanated from the bushes on the bank. A cold wind blew on his wet, sand-covered feet. He entered the Senate porch with a defiant heart. "I am in no fear of anything here," he muttered. The Senate House was deserted, not a sound any where. The whole building was in darkness, except the staircase landing where a large bulb was burning. And notice-boards hung on the wall.

His heart palpitated as he stood tip toe to scan the results. By the light of the bulb he scrutinized the numbers. His throat went dry. He looked through the numbers of people who had passed in Third-Class. His own number was 501. The successful number before him was 498, and after that 703. "So I have a few friends on either side," he said with a forced mirth. He had a wild hope as the approached the Senate Hall that somehow his number would have found a place in the list of successful candidates. He had speculated how he should feel after that..... He would rush home, and demand that they take back all their comments with apologies. But now after gazing at the notice-board for quite a while the grim reality of his failure dawned on him, his number was nowhere. "I am going," he told the notice-board, and moved a few steps. "I haven't seen how many have obtained honours." He looked at the notice-board once again. He gazed at the top columns of the results. First classes—curiously enough a fellow with number one secured a first-class, and six others. "Good fellows, wonder how they manage it!" he said with admiration. His eyes travelled down to second classes—it was in two lines starting with 98. There were about fifteen. He looked fixedly at each number before going on to the next. He came to 350, after that 400, and after that 501 and then 600.

"Five Nought One in Second-Class! Can it be

true?" he shrieked. He looked at the number again and again. Yes, there it was. He had obtained a second-class. "If this is true I shall sit in the B.A. class next month," he shouted. His voice rang through the silent building. "I will flay alive anyone who calls me a fool hereafter....." he proclaimed. He felt slightly giddy. He leant against the wall. Years of strain and suspense were suddenly relaxed; and he could hardly bear the force of this release. Blood raced along his veins and heaved and knocked under his skull. He steadied himself with an effort. He softly hummed a tune to himself. He felt he was the sole occupant of the world and its overlord. He thumped his chest and addressed the notice-board. "Know who I am?" He stroked an imaginary moustache arrogantly, laughed to himself, and asked, "Is the horse ready, groom?" He threw a supercilious side glance at the notice-board and strutted out like a king. He stood on the last step of the porch and looked for his steed. He waited for a minute and commanded, "Fool, bring the horse nearer. Do you hear?" The horse was brought nearer. He made a movement as if mounting and whipped his horse into a fury. His voice rang through the dark river side, urging the horse on. He swung his arms and ran along the sands. He shouted at the top of his voice; "Keep off; the king is coming; whoever comes his way will be trampled....."

"I have five hundred and one horse," he spoke to the night. The number stuck in his mind and kept

coming up again and again. He ran the whole length of the river bank up and down. Somehow this did not satisfy him. "Prime Minister?" he said. "This horse is no good. Bring me the other five hundred and one horses, they are all in second-classes——" He gave a kick to the horse which he had been riding and drove it off. Very soon the Prime Minister brought him another horse. He mounted it with dignity, and said, "This is better." Now he galloped about on his horse. It was a strange sight. In the dim star light, alone at that hour, making a tap-tap with his tongue to imitate galloping hoofs. With one hand swinging and tugging the reins, and with the other stroking his moustache defiantly he urged the horse on and on until it attained the speed of a storm. He felt like a conqueror as the air rushed about him. Soon he crossed the whole stretch of sand. He came to the water's edge, hesitated for a moment and whispered to his horse: "Are you afraid of water? You must swim across, otherwise I will never pay five nought one rupees for you." He felt the horse make a leap.

Next afternoon his body came up at a spot about a quarter of a mile down the course of the river. Meanwhile some persons had already picked up the coat left on the step, and discovered in the inner pocket the slip of paper with the inscription:

"My dear father: By the time you see this letter I shall be at the bottom of Sarayu. I don't want to live. Don't worry about me. You have other sons who are not such dunces as I am——"

THE SALT INSPECTOR

Prem Chand

When the new Salt Department was set up and it was fobidden to use such a God-given commodity, people started contraband trading in this article. It gave rise to numerous trickeries, some resorted to bribes, other to cunning. Those in authority had a merry time. People were ready to give up the all powerful position of a patwari for the sake of serving as a menial in this department. Even lawyers coveted the post of inspectors here. This was an age when people considered English education and the creed of Christianity to be one and the same thing. Persian dominated everywhere. Those who knew Persian were appointed to the highest places on the strength of their having read a few love stories and poetry dealing with the theme of love. Munshi Vanshi Dhar too set out in search of a job, having finished the story of the sad parting of Zuleikna and considering the love tales of Majnoo and Farhad as more significant than the battles of Nala and Neela and even the discovery of America. His father was an experienced person. He advised his son as follows, "Son! you see in what a sad state our household affairs are! We are weighed down under the burden of debts. The girls are growing fast like wild grass. I am like a tree on a bank, likely to be uprooted any moment. You are now virtually the head of the household. While looking for a job, do not care for high position. A job is like the grave of a *pir*. You have to con-

sider what offerings and presents it brings. You must look for a place which provides some additional income. A monthly salary is like the full moon. You see it today, but gradually it fades away. Additional income is an ever-flowing source which can always quench the thirst. Salary is a man-made thing; so it brings no prosperity. Additional income is God-given, that is why it brings prosperity. You are wise enough; it is unnecessary for me to speak further. One needs a good deal of intelligence and understanding for this. You have to consider the man, his necessity and the opportunity; after that you may do what you think best. There is unlimited profit in being severe with a needy person. But it is difficult to cover a person who is not needy. You should remember these things well. These are my savings from the experiences of a lifetime."

After this advice the father offered his blessings. Vanshi Dhar was an obedient son. He listened to everything carefully and then left the house. In this vast world he had only fortitude as his friend, intelligence as his guide and self-reliance as his supporter. But he had started under an auspicious star, for he immediately found a job as inspector in the Salt Department. The salary was good and there were no limits to the additional income one could earn. When the aged Munshiji heard the good news, he could hardly contain himself with joy. The creditors softened somewhat, the liquor-dealer's hopes revived.

The neighbours felt sore at heart.

II

Those were winter days and the time was night. The sentries and watchmen of the Salt Department were plunged in intoxication. It was not more than six months since Munshi Vanshi Dhar had arrived here, but already in this brief period he had won the favour of his officers by his competence and fine behaviour. The officers trusted him completely. The Jumna flowed about a mile to the east of the office; there was a pontoon bridge over it. The inspector was sunk in sweet sleep with his doors closed. All of a sudden he woke up and heard the rumbling of carts and the clamour of boatmen instead of the sound of flowing water. He got up. Why were these carts crossing the river late at night? There must be something wrong in it. Reason confirmed his doubts. He put on his uniform, put the revolver in his pocket, and in no time he rode on towards the bridge. He saw a long line of carts going across the bridge. He challenged them, "whose carts are these?"

There was silence for some time. They whispered among themselves. Then the man in front said, "They belong to Pandit Alopi Din."

"Which Pandit Alopi Din?"

"Of Dataganj."

Munshi Vanshi Dhar started. Pandit Alopi Din was the most respected landlord in this area. His money-lending deals ran into lakhs; there was no one

this side, small or big, who was not indebted to him. His business too was widespread. He was an immensely wide-awake person. English officials who came into this region for shikar stayed with him as his guests. He kept an open house all the time.

Munshiji enquired, "Where will these carts go?" "To Kanpur," he was told. But on his asking what those carts contained, again there was silence. The suspicions of the inspector were further increased. After waiting a while for a reply he asked loudly, "Are you all dumb? I am asking, what are these carts carrying?"

When he received no reply even then, he spurred on his horse and getting close to a cart felt the contents of a sack. His doubts were removed. It was salt.

III

Pandit Alopi Din was moving on his magnificent chariot, half asleep and half awake. Suddenly a number of his cart drivers came full of panic and woke him up. They said, "Sir, the inspector has stopped the carts and is standing by the *ghat* enquiring for you."

Pandit Alopi Din had immense faith in the Goddess of Wealth. He used to say that wealth rules the next world too, much more so this one. There was truth too in what he said! Justice and policy are toys of wealth. She plays with them as she likes. He continued to rest and said arrogantly, "I am

coming." After that Panditji prepared some pan for himself in a carefree manner and put it into his mouth. Then he wrapped himself in his quilt and approached the inspector. He said, "Blessings, babuji. What fault have I committed that you have stopped my carts? You ought to deal kindly with us Brahmins."

Vanshi Dhar replied drily, "Government orders." Pandit Alopi Din laughed at this and said, "we know neither government orders nor the government. You are our government. This is a matter between ourselves. I was not doing anything behind your back. You have troubled yourself uselessly. It is impossible that we should travel this way and make no offering to the god of this *ghat*. I was myself coming to pay my regards to you." Vanshi Dhar remained unaffected by the siren voices of wealth and riches. He was filled with fresh zeal of honesty. He cracked out, "I am not among the shameless crowd that sacrifices its conscience for a mess of pottage, you are under arrest now. In the morning you will be prosecuted in accordance with the requirements of the law. I have no time to waste on further talk. Jamadar, take him into custody; I order you!"

Pandit Alopi Din was stunned. There was sensation among the cart drivers. Perhaps this was the first occassion in his life when Panditji had to hear such harsh words. Jamadar Badloo Singh moved a few steps but he could not dare to grip the

wrists of Panditji, so great was his prestige. Panditji had never before seen duty spurning rishes in this cavalier fashion. He thought this was but a raw, importunate lad. He had not yet succumbed to the lures of wordliness. He was still immature and hesitant. He spoke very humbly. "Babuji, please don't do this. We shall be nowhere. Our prestige will tumble down into dust. What will you gain by disgracing me? I am entirely amenable to your wishes."

Vanshi Dhar exclaimed harshly, "I do not wish to hear this sort of thing."

The support which Alopi Din had considered to be firm as a rock, seemed to be slipping from under his feet. His self-respect and sense of wealth and luxury received a rude shock. But he still had confidence in the numerical strength of money. He said to his clerk, "Lalaji, please offer a thousand worth of currency notes to Baboo Sahib. He is a hungry lion at this moment."

Vanshi Dhar replied heatedly, "One thousand cannot, not even a lakh can shake me from the path of duty!"

Wealth was very irritated at this foolish firmness and rare sacrifice. The two forces strove for mastery against each other. Wealth began its attacks by leaps and bounds. The sum was raised from one to five, five to ten and at last to twenty thousand; but duty faced this large force with unearthly heroism, stern and unshakeable like a mountain.

Alopi Din despaired, "I cannot do more. You may now do what you please!"

Vanshi Dhar called to the Jamadar. Badloo Singh moved forward towards Pandit Alopi Din cursing the inspector in his heart. Panditji retreated a step or two in distress. He spoke very humbly, "Babu Sahib, take pity on me. I am prepared to settle this at twenty-five thousand."

"Impossible."

"At thirty thousand?"

"Entirely impossible."

"Not even at forty thousand."

"Not even at forty lakhs. Badloo Singh! Take this person immediately in custody. I wish to hear nothing else now."

Duty trampled wealth under its feet. Alopi Din saw a sturdy fellow moving towards him with handcuffs. He looked all round in despair and sorrow. Then he fell down unconscious.

IV

The world slumbered, but its tongue did not seem to have rested at all. Early in the morning this story could be heard from any one, young or old. Everyone was offering comments on the behaviour of Panditji; he was being denounced and censured, as though people were thus washing away sin from the world. The milkman who offers water as milk, the officials who fill their diaries with imaginary entries, the baboos who travel without tickets in

railway trains, the traders and money-lenders who forge documents—one and all were nodding heads with god-like superiority. When next day Pandit Alopi Din was taken to court as the accused, hand-cuffed and surrounded by constables, his head bowed with shame, bitterness and sorrow gnawing at his heart, there was a sensation in the whole town. Eyes could hardly be so eager even at a fair!

But he had only to reach the Court. Pandit Alopi Din ruled this deep, impenetrable wood like a king. Those in authority were devoted to him, the clerks were his humble servants, the lawyers were at his beck and call and the peons, orderlies and watchmen were as good as his slaves. On seeing him they rushed from all sides. Everyone was wonder-struck, not because Alopi Din had done such a deed, but because he had been caught on the wrong side of the law. Why should a man who had wealth which could realise the unrealisable, and unlimited power of talk, ever come within the grip of the law? Every-one offered sympathy to him. At once an army of lawyers was got ready to defend him against this onslaught. On the juridical battle field, a furious struggle began between wealth and duty. Vanshi Dhar stood quietly. He had no strength except that of truth nor any weapon apart from plain speech. There were witnesses, but these were badly shaken by the greed of money.

Munshiji even felt that justice was cold towards

him. These were the halls of justice, but their officials were affected with the spirit of partisanship. What union can there be between justice and partisan spirit? Where there is favouritism, it is difficult even to think of justice. The case was soon over. The Deputy Magistrate wrote in his judgment that the evidence produced against Pandit Alopi Din was false and misleading. He was a man of very high position. It was unthinkable that he would perform a deed of such desperation for the sake of a little profit. Though the Salt Inspector, Munshi Vanshi Dhar, was not very much to blame, still it was extremely regrettable that a gentleman had been put to trouble owing to his arrogance and thoughtlessness. The Court was pleased that he was so vigilant and alert in his duty, but the extreme devotion and loyalty prevailing in the Salt Department had militated against his commonsense and knowledge of property. In future he should be more careful.

The lawyers heard this decision and leapt with joy. Pandit Alopi Din emerged outside wreathed in smiles. His friends and relatives showered money as gifts. The veritable ocean of generosity which surged up well-nigh shook the Court foundations. When Vanshi Dhar came out, ironical remarks were aimed at him from every side. The peons offered him deep *salaams*. But at this moment, every innuendo and bitter remark further wounded his self-respect. Very probably he would not have

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walked with such swagger, had he won this case. He had had a strange and bitter experience of the world today. Justice and learning, high degrees, huge beards and loose gowns, none of them seemed worthy of true respect.

Vanshi Dhar had stood up in opposition to wealth. He had necessarily to pay the penalty for that. Hardly had a week passed, when he received an order dismissing him. He was punished for doing his duty too well. He left for home, broken-hearted and full of bitterness and grief. The old Munshi had been grumbling even before that his words of parting advice had not been heeded by the son. He did just that he pleased. The father had to put up with reminders from the butcher and the liquor-dealer and had to live as an ascetic without meat or drink in his old age. Here there was nothing but the miserable pittance of a salary. He too had been in service and though he was no officer, he had done, whatever he had wished to, with a carefree heart. But the youngester was trying to be an honest man! Though the home was plunged in darkness, he wanted to light a lamp in the mosque! One could only pity such an understanding. The whole of his education had been a waste. When shortly after this Munshi Vanshi Dhar reached home in a sad state and the old father heard the whole story, he beat his own head. He said, "I should like to smash my own head and yours

too!" For a long time he rubbed his hands with vain regrets and grief. He even said a few harsh things in his anger, and if Vanshi Dhar had not beaten a retreat, his anger would certainly have led to an explosion. His old mother too was saddened. Her dreams of pilgrimage to Jagannath and Rameshwaram were now mingled with the dust. His wife did not speak to him properly for days.

A week passed by in this fashion. It was evening. The old Munshiji was telling his beads. At this moment a gaily decked-out chariot halted at their door. It had pink and green curtains and a sturdy pair of bullocks from the western districts wearing blue strings round their necks and their horns tipped with brass. There was a retinue of attendants with lathis on their shoulders. Munshiji ran forward to welcome the guest. He found that it was Pandit Alopi Din. He bowed low and spoke cringinly, "We are gratified that your feet will sanctify this household. You are as a god to us. We have been disgraced and don't know how to face you. We are unlucky in our son; otherwise we had no need to hide our face from you. May God keep one childless rather than give such a son!"

Alopi Din said, "No, brother, Don't say this."

Munshiji asked in surprise, "Then how can I describe such children?"

Alopi Din replied in an affectionate tone, "How

many conscientious people are there in the world who can sacrifice all at the altar of conscience and add thus to the family name and glory?"

Pandit Alopi Din said to Vanshi Dhar, "Inspector Sahib, I need not have troubled to come here only to flatter you. That night you took me in custody by the force of authority, but today I offer myself voluntarily to be in your custody. I have met thousands of rich men and have had dealings with numerous officers, but I have been defeated only by you. I had enslaved everyone else by my wealth. Permit me to make a request to you."

When Vanshi Dhar saw Alopi Din coming, he had risen to welcome him, but with a feeling of self-respect. He thought this gentleman had come to shame him and humiliate him. He asked for no pardon and offered no excuses; rather he found the the servile words of his father unbearable. But when he heard Panditji's talk, his bitterness of heart melted away. He cast a fleeting glance at Panditji. He looked genial and well-disposed. Pride now gave way to shame. He said humbly, "It is your generosity to say this. Kindly forgive me for my discourtesy. I was bound by the strong fetters of duty. Otherwise I am your obedient servant. Whatever you may order, I shall carry it out."

Alopi Din spoke as one begging a favour: "You had rejected my request at the river bank, but you will have to accept it today."

Vanshi Dhar said, "I am not good for anything, but whatever service I can render you, I shall do without any blemish."

Alopi Din produced a stamped paper and offering it to Vanshi Dhar said, "Please accept this post and put your signature to it. I am a brahmin and shall not budge from your door, until this matter is settled."

When Vanshi Dhar read that paper, his eyes were dimmed with tears of gratitude. Pandit Alopi Din had appointed him permanent manager of all his property. Apart from six thousand rupees as annual salary he offered expenses for everyday purposes, horses for use as conveyance, a bungalow to reside in and free servants. He replied in a quivering voice, "Panditji, I lack the strength to praise this generosity of yours. But I do not deserve such a high place."

Alopi Din replied, full of laughter, "I need an undeserving person just now!"

Vanshi Dhar was serious and he said, "Then I am at your disposal. It will be my good fortune, if I can serve a gentleman of such a good reputation. But I have neither knowledge nor wisdom, nor the experience which makes up for these shortcomings. For such a big post you need a very seasoned person with a penetrating vision."

Alopi Din took out a pen from the pen-case and placed it in the hand of Vanshi Dhar. He said, "I do not need learning, experience, penetrating vision or

efficiency and skill in work. I have discovered how useful these qualities are. Now good fortune and favourable opportunity has given me a jewel before which competence and learning pale into insignificance. Take this pen; there is no occasion for any further hesitation. Please sign the paper. My prayer to God is that you should always be the same harsh, inflexible, arrogant but conscientious inspector which you were on the river bank that night!"

Vanshi Dhar's eyes were dimmed. The narrow vessel of the heart could hardly contain so much gratitude. Once again he glanced at Panditji with loyalty and respect and signed the paper containing the offer of managership with a shaking hand.

Alopi Din embraced him joyfully.

THE STORY-TELLER

Saki

It was a hot afternoon, and the railway carriage was correspondingly sultry, and the next stop was at Temple-combe, nearly an hour ahead. The occupants of the carriage were a small girl, and a smaller girl, and a small boy. An aunt belonging to the children occupied one corner seat, and the further corner seat on the opposite side were occupied by a bachelor who was a stranger to their party, but the small girls and the small boy emphatically occupied the compartment. Both the aunt and the children were conversational in a limited, persistent way, reminding one of the attentions of a house fly that refused to be discouraged. Most of the aunt's remarks seemed to begin with "Don't," and nearly all of the children's remarks began with "Why?" The bachelor said nothing out loud.

"Don't, Cyril, don't," exclaimed the aunt, as the small boy began smacking the cushions of the seat, producing a cloud of dust at each blow.

"Come and look out of the window," she added.

The child moved reluctantly to the window. "Why are those sheep being driven out of that field?" he asked.

"I expect they are being driven to another field where there is more grass," said the aunt weakly.

"But there is lots of grass in that field," protested

the boy; "there's nothing else but grass there. Aunt, there's lots of grass in that field."

"Perhaps the grass in the other field is better," suggested the aunt fatuously.

"Why is it better?" came the swift, inevitable question.

"Oh, look at those cows!" exclaimed the aunt. Nearly every field along the line had contained cows or bullocks, but she spoke as though she were drawing attention to a rarity.

"Why is the grass in the other field better?" persisted Cyril.

The frown on the bachelor's face was deepening to a scowl. He was a hard, unsympathetic man, the aunt decided in her mind. She was utterly unable to come to any satisfactory decision about the grass in the other field.

The smaller girl created a diversion by beginning to recite "On the Road to Mandlay." She only knew the first line, but she put her limited knowledge to the fullest possible use. She repeated the line over and over again in a dreamy but resolute and very audible voice; it seemed to the bachelor as though some one had had a bet with her that she could not repeat the line aloud two thousand times without stopping. Whoever it was who had made the wager was likely to lose his bet.

"Come over here and listen to a story," said the

aunt, when the bachelor had looked twice at her and once at the communication cord.

The children moved listelessly toward the aunt's end of the carriage. Evidently her reputation as a story-teller did not rank high in their estimation.

In a low, confidential voice, interrupted at frequent intervals by loud, petulant questions from her listeners, she began an unenterprising and deplorably uninteresting story about a little girl who was good, and made friends with every one on account of her goodness, and was finally saved from a mad bull by a number of rescuers who admired her moral character.

"Wouldn't they have saved her if she hadn't been good?" demanded the bigger of the small girls. It was exactly the question that the bachelor had wanted to ask.

"Well, yes," admitted the aunt lamely, "but I don't think they would have run quite so fast to her help if they had not liked her so much."

"It's the stupidest story I've ever heard," said the bigger of the small girls, with immense conviction.

"I didn't listen after the first bit, it was so stupid", said Cyril.

The smaller girl made no actual comment on the story, but she had long ago recommenced a murmured repetition of her favourite line.

"You don't seem to be a success as a story-teller,"

said the bachelor suddenly from his corner.

The aunt bristled in instant defence at this unexpected attack.

"It's a very difficult thing to tell stories that children can both understand and appreciate," she said stiffly.

"I don't agree with you," said the bachelor.

"Perhaps you would like to tell them a story," was the aunt's retort.

"Tell us a story," demanded the bigger of the small girl.

"Once upon a time," began the bachelor, "there was a little girl called Bertha, who was extraordinarily good."

The children's momentarily aroused interest began at once to flicker; all stories seemed dreadfully alike, no matter who told them.

"She did all that she was told, she was always truthful, she kept her clothes clean, ate milk puddings as though they were jam tarts, learned her lessons perfectly, and was polite in her manners."

"Was she pretty?" asked the bigger of the small girls.

"Not as pretty as any of you," said the bachelor, "but she was horribly good."

There was a wave of reaction in favour of the story; the word horrible in connection with goodness was novelty that commended itself. It seemed to introduce a ring of truth that was absent from the

aunt's tales of infant life.

"She was so good," continued the bachelor, "that she won several medals for goodness, which she always wore, pinned on to her dress. There was a medal for obedience, another medal for punctuality, and a third for good behaviour. They were large metal medals and they clicked against one another as she walked. No other child in the town where she lived had as many as three medals, so everybody knew that she must be an extra good child."

"Horribly good,", quoted Cyril.

"Everybody talked about her goodness, and the Prince of the country got to hear about it, and he said that as she was so very good she might be allowed once a week to walk in his park, which was just outside the town. It was a beautiful park, and no children were ever allowed in it, so it was a great honour for Bertha to be allowed to go there."

"Were there any sheep in the park?" demanded Cyril.

"No," said the bachelor, "there were no sheep."

"Why weren't there any sheep?" came the inevitable question arising out of that answer.

The aunt permitted herself a smile, which might almost have been described as a grin.

"There were no sheep in the park," said the bachelor, "because the Prince's mother had once had a dream that her son would either be killed by a sheep or else by a clock falling on him. For that reason

the Prince never kept a sheep in his park or a clock in her palace."

The aunt suppressed a gasp of admiration.

"Was the Prince killed by a sheep or by a clock?" asked Cyril.

"He is still alive, so we can't tell whether the dream will come true," said the bachelor unconcernedly; "anyway, there were no sheep in the park, but there were lots of little pigs running all over the place."

"What colour were they?"

"Black with white faces, white with black spots, black all over, grey with white patches, and some were white all over."

The story-teller paused to let a full idea of the park's treasures sink into the children's imaginations; then he resumed:

"Bertha was rather sorry to find that there were no flowers in the park. She had promised her aunts, with tears in her eyes, that she would not pick any of the kind Prince's flowers, and she had meant to keep her promise, so of course it made her feel silly to find that there were no flowers to pick."

"Why weren't there any flowers?"

"Because the pigs had eaten them all," said the bachelor promptly. "The gardeners had told the Prince that you couldn't have pigs and flowers, so he decided to have pigs and no flowers."

There was a murmur of approval at the excellence

of the Prince's decision; so many people would have decided the other way.

"There were lots of other delightful things in the park. There were ponds with gold and blue and green fish in them, and trees with beautiful parrots that said clever things at a moment's notice, and humming birds that hummed all the popular tunes of the day. Bertha walked up and down and enjoyed herself immensely, and thought to herself: 'If I were not so extraordinarily good I should not have been allowed to come into this beautiful park and enjoy all that there is to be seen in it,' and her three medals clinked against one another as she walked and helped to remind her how very good she really was. Just then an enormous wolf came prowling into the park to see if it could catch a fat little pig for its supper."

"What colour was it?" asked the children, amid an immediate quickening of interest.

"Mud-colour all over with a black tongue and pale grey eyes that gleamed with unspeakable ferocity. The first thing that it saw in the park was Bertha; her pinafore was so spotlessly white and clean that it could be seen from a great distance. Bertha saw the wolf and saw that it was stealing towards her, and she began to wish that she had never been allowed to come into the park. She ran as hard as she could, and the wolf came after her with huge leaps and bounds. She managed to reach a shrubbery of myrtle bushes and she hid herself in one of the

thickest of the bushes. The wolf came sniffing among the branches, its black tongue lolling out of its mouth and its pale grey eyes glaring with rage. Bertha was terribly frightened and thought to herself: 'If I had not been so extraordinarily good I should have been safe in the town at this moment.' However, the scent of the myrtle was so strong that the wolf could not sniff out where Bertha was hiding, and the bushes were so thick that he might have hunted about in them for a long time without catching sight of her, so he thought he might as well go off and catch a little pig instead. Bertha was trembling very much at having the wolf prowling and sniffing so near her, and as she trembled the medal for obedience clinked against the medals for good conduct and punctuality. The wolf was just moving away when he heard the sound of the medals clinking and stopped to listen; they clinked again in a bush quite near him. He dashed into the bush, his pale grey eyes gleaming with ferocity and triumph and dragged Bertha out and devoured her to the last morsel. All that was left of her were her shoes, bits of clothing and the three medals for goodness."

"Where any of the little pigs killed?"

"No, they all escaped."

"The story began badly," said the smaller of the small girls, "but it had a beautiful ending."

"It is the most beautiful story that I ever heard," said the bigger of the small girls, with immense

decision.

"It is the only beautiful story I have ever heard," said Cyril.

A dissentient opinion came from the aunt.

"A most improper story to tell to young children! You have undermined the effect of years of careful teaching."

"At any rate," said the bachelor, collecting his belongings preparatory to leaving the carriage, "I them quiet for ten minutes, which was more than you were able to do."

"Unhappy woman!" he observed to himself as he walked down the platform of Templecombe station; "for the next six months or so those children will assail her in public with demands for an improper story!"

MY FAIR NEIGHBOUR

Rabindranath Tagore

My feelings towards the young widow who lived in the next house to mine were feelings of worship: at least, that is what I told to my friends and myself. Even my nearest intimate, Nabin, knew nothing of the real state of my mind. And I had a sort of pride that I could keep my passion pure by thus concealing it in the inmost recesses of my heart. She was like a dew-drenched *sephali*-blossom, untimely fallen to earth. Too radiant and holy for the flower-decked marriage-bed, she had been dedicated to Heaven.

But passion is like the mountain stream, and refuses to be enclosed in the place of its birth; it must seek an outlet. That is why I tried to give expression to my emotions in poems; but my unwilling pen refused to desecrate the object of my worship.

It happened curiously that just at this time my friend Nabin was afflicted with a madness of verse. It came upon him like an earthquake. It was the poor fellow's first attack, and he was equally unprepared for rhyme and rhythm. Nevertheless he could not refrain, for he succumbed to the fascination, as a widower to his second wife.

So Nabin sought help from me. The subject of his poems was the old, old one, which is ever new: his poems were all addressed to the beloved one. I slapped his back in jest and asked him: 'Well, old

chap, who is she?'

Nabin laughed, as he replied: 'That I have not yet discovered!'.

I confess that I found considerable comfort in bringing help to my friend. Like a hen brooding on a duck's egg, I lavished all the warmth of my pent-up passion on Nabin's effusions. So vigorously did I revise and improve his crude productions, that the larger part of each poem became my own.

Then Nabin would say in surprise: 'That is just what I wanted to say, but could not. How on earth do you manage to get hold of all these fine sentiments?'

Poet-like, I would reply: 'They come from my imagination; for, as you know, truth is silent, and it is imagination only which waxes eloquent. Reality represses the flow of feeling like a rock; imagination cuts out a path for itself.'

And the poor puzzled Nabin would say: 'Y-e-s, I see, yes, of course'; and then after some thought would murmur again: 'Yes, yes, you are right!'

As I have already said, in my own love there was a feeling of reverential delicacy which prevented me from putting it into words. But with Nabin as a screen, there was nothing to hinder the flow of my pen; and a true warmth of feeling gushed out into these vicarious poems.

Nabin in his lucid moments would say: 'But these are yours!. Let me publish them over your name.'

'Nonsense!' I would reply. 'They are yours, my dear fellow; I have only added a touch or two here and there.'

And Nabin gradually came to believe it.

I will not deny that, with a feeling akin to that of the astronomer gazing into the starry heavens, I did sometimes turn my eyes towards the window of the house next door. It is also true that now and again my furtive glances would be rewarded with a vision. And the least glimpse of the pure light of that countenance would at once still and clarify all that was turbulent and unworthy in my emotions.

But one day I was startled. Could I believe my eyes? It was a hot summer afternoon. One of the fierce and fitful nor'-westers was threatening. Black clouds were massed in the north-west corner of the sky; and against the strange and fearful light of that background my fair neighbour stood, gazing out into empty space. And what a world of forlorn longing did I discover in the far-way look of those lustrous black eyes! Was there then, perchance, still some living volcano within the serene radiance of that moon of mine? Alas! that look of limitless yearning, which was winging its way through the clouds like an eager bird, surely sought—not heaven—but the nest of some human heart!

At the sight of the unutterable passion of that look I could hardly contain myself. I was no longer satisfied with correcting crude poems. My whole

being longed to express itself in some worthy action. At last I thought I would devote myself to making widow-remarriage popular in my country. I was prepared not only to speak and write on the subject, but also to spend money on its cause.

Nabin began to argue with me. 'Permanent widowhood,' said he, has in it a sense of immense purity and peace; a calm beauty like that of the silent places of the dead shimmering in the wan light of the eleventh moon. Would not the mere possibly of remarriage destroy its divine beauty?'

Now this sort of sentimentality always makes me furious. In time of famine, if a well-fed man speaks scornfully of food, and advises a starving man at point of death to glut his hunger on the fragrance of flowers and the song of birds, what are we to think of him? I said with some heat: 'Look here, Nabin, to the artist a ruin may be a beautiful object; but houses are built not only for the contemplation of artists, but that people may live therein; so they have to be kept in repair in spite of artistic susceptibilities. It is all very well for you to idealise widowhood from your safe distance, but you should remember that within widowhood there is a sensitive human heart, throbbing with pain and desire.'

I had an impression that the conversion of Nabin would be a difficult matter, so perhaps I was more impassioned than I need have been. I was somewhat surprised to find at the conclusion of my little speech

that Nabin after a single thoughtful sigh completely agreed with me. The even more convincing peroration which I felt I might have delivered was not needed!

After about a week Nabin came to me, and said that if I would help him he was prepared to lead the way by marrying a widow himself.

I was overjoyed. I embraced him effusively, and promised him any money that might be required for the purpose. Then Nabin told me his story.

I learned that Nabin's loved one was not an imaginary being. It appeared that Nabin, too, had for some time adored a widow from a distance, but had not spoken of his feelings to any living soul. Then the magazines in which Nabin's poems, or rather my poems, used to appear had not been ineffective.

Not that Nabin had deliberately intended, as he was careful to explain, to conduct love-making in that way. In fact, said he, he had no idea that the widow knew how to read. He used to post the magazine, without disclosing the sender's name, addressed to the widow's brother. It was only a sort of fancy of his, a concession to his hopeless passion. It was flinging garlands before a deity; it is not the worshipper's affair whether the god knows or not, whether he accepts or ignores the offering.

And Nabin particularly wanted me to understand that he had no definite end in view when on diverse pretexts he sought and made the acquaintance of the

widow's brother. Any near relation of the loved one needs must have a special interest for the lover.

Then followed a long story about how an illness of the brother at last brought them together. The presence of the poet himself naturally led to much discussion of the poems; nor was the discussion necessarily restricted to the subject out of which it arose.

After his recent defeat in argument at my hands. Nabin had mustered up courage to propose marriage to the widow. At first he could not gain her consent. But when he had made full use of my eloquent words, supplemented by a tear or two of his own, the fair one capitulated unconditionally. Some money was now wanted by her guardian to make arrangements.

'Take it at once,' said I.

'But,' Nabin went on, 'you know it will be some months before I can appease my father sufficiently for him to continue my allowance. How are we to live in the meantime?' I wrote out the necessary cheque without a word, and then I said; 'Now tell me who she is. You need not look on me as a possible rival, for I swear I will not write poems to her; and even if I do I will not send them to her brother, but to you!'

'Don't be absurd,' said Nabin; 'I have not kept back her name because I feared your rivalry! The fact is, she was very much perturbed at taking this unusual step, and had asked me not to talk about the matter to my friends. But it no longer matters,

now that everything has been satisfactorily settled. She lives at No. 19, the house next to yours.'

If my heart had been an iron boiler it would have burst. 'So she has no objection to remarriage?' I simply asked.

'Not at the present moment,' replied Nabin with a smile.

'And was it the poems alone which wrought the magic change?'

'Well, my poems were not so bad, you know,' said Nabin, 'were they?'

I swore mentally.

But at whom was I to swear? At him? At myself? At Providence? All the same, I swore.

THE NECKLACE

Guy De Maupassant

She was one of those pretty and charming girls born, as though fate had blundered over her, into a family of artisans. She had no marriage portion, no expectations, no means of getting known, understood, loved, and wedded by a man of wealth and distinction; and she let herself be married off to a little clerk in the Ministry of Education.

Her tastes were simple because she had never been able to afford any other, but she was as unhappy as though she had married beneath her; for women have no caste, or class; their beauty, grace, and charm serving them for birth or family.

She suffered endlessly, feeling herself born for every delicacy and luxury. She suffered from the poorness of her house, from its mean walls, worn chairs and ugly curtains. All these things, of which other women of her class would not even have been aware, tormented and insulted her. The sight of the little Breton girl who came to do the work in her little house aroused heart-broken regrets and hopeless dreams in her mind. She imagined silent antechambers, heavy with Oriental tapestries, lit by torches in lofty bronze sockets, with two tall footmen in knee-breeches sleeping in large arm-chairs, overcome by the heavy warmth of the stove. She imagined vast saloons hung with antique silks, exquisite pieces of furniture supporting priceless ornaments, and small charming perfumed rooms, created

just for little parties of intimate friends, men who were famous and sought after, whose homage roused every other woman's envious longings.

When she sat down for dinner at the round table covered with a three-day-old cloth, opposite her husband, who took the cover off the soup-tureen, exclaiming delightedly: "Aha! Scotch broth! What could be better?" she imagined delicate meals, gleaming silver tapestries peopling the walls with folk of a past age and strange birds in faery forests; she imagined delicate food served in marvellous dishes, murmured gallantries, listened to with an inscrutable smile as one trifled with the rosy flesh of trout or wings of asparagus chicken.

She had no clothes, no jewels, nothing. And these were the only things she loved; she felt that she was made for them. She had longed so eagerly to charm, to be desired, to be wildly attractive and sought after.

She had a rich friend, an old school friend whom she refused to visit, because she suffered so keenly when she returned home. She would weep whole days, with grief, regret, despair, and misery.

One evening her husband came home with an exultant air, holding a large envelope in his hand.

"Here's something for you," he said.

Swiftly she tore the paper and drew out a printed card on which were these words:

"The Minister of Education and Madame Ramponneau request the pleasure of the company of Monsieur and Madame Loisel at the Ministry on the evening of Monday, January the 18th."

Instead of being delighted, as her husband hoped, she flung the invitation petulantly across tht table, murmuring:

"What do you want me to do with this?"

"Why darling, I thought you'd be pleased. You never go out, and this is a great occasion. I had tremendous trouble to get it. Every one wants one; it's very select, and very few go to the clerks. You'll see all the really big people there."

She looked at him out of furious eyes, and said impatiently:

"And what do you suppose I am to wear at such an affair?"

He had not thought about it; he stammered:

"Why, the dress you go to the theatre in. It looks very nice to me....."

He stopped, stupefied and utterly at a loss when he saw that his wife was beginning to cry. Two large tears ran slowly down from the corners of her eyes towards the corners of her mouth.

"What's the matter with you? What's the matter with you?" he faltered.

But with a violent effort she overcame her grief and replied in a calm voice, wiping her wet cheeks:

"Nothing. Only I haven't a dress and so I can't go to this party. Give your invitation to some friend of yours whose wife will be turned out better than I shall."

He was heart-broken:

"Look here, Mathilde," he persisted. "What would be the cost of a suitable dress, which you could use on other occasions as well, something very simple?"

She thought for several seconds, reckoning up prices and also wondering for how large a sum she could ask without bringing upon herself an immediate refusal and an exclamation of horror from the careful-minded clerk.

At last she replied with some hesitation:

"I don't know exactly, but I think I could do it on four hundred francs."

He grew slightly pale, for this was exactly the amount he had been saving for a gun, intending to get a little shooting next summer on the plain of Nanterre with some friends who went lark-shooting there on Sundays.

Nevertheless he said: "Very well. I' will give you four hundred francs. But try and get a really nice dress with the money."

The day of the party drew near, and Madame Loisel seemed sad, uneasy and anxious. Her dress was ready, however. One evening her husband said to her:

"What's the matter with you? You've been very odd for the last three days."

"I'm utterly miserable at not having any jewels, not a single stone, to wear", she replied. "I shall look absolutely no one. I would almost rather not go to the party."

"Wear flowers," he said. "They're very smart at this time of the year. For ten francs you could get two or three gorgeous roses."

She was not convinced.

"No....there's nothing so humiliating as looking poor in the middle of a lot of rich women."

"How stupid you are!" exclaimed her husband. "Go and see Madame Forestier and ask her to lend you some jewels. You know her quite well enough for that."

She uttered a cry of delight.

"That's true. I never thought of it."

Next day she went to see her friend and told her trouble.

Madame Forestier went to her dressing-table, took up a large box, brought it to Madame Loisel, opened it and said:

"Choose, my dear."

First she saw some bracelets, then a pearl necklace, then a Venetian cross in gold and gems, of exquisite workmanship. She tried the effect of the jewels before the mirror, hesitating, unable to make up her mind to leave them, to give them up. She

kept on asking:

"Haven't you anything else?"

"Yes. Look for yourself. I don't know what you would like best."

Suddenly she discovered, in a black satin case, a superb diamond necklace; her heart began to beat covetously. Her hands trembled as she lifted it. She fastened it round her neck, upon her high dress, and remained in ecstasy at sight of herself.

Then, with hesitation, she asked in anguish:

"Could you lend me this, just this alone?"

"Yes, of course."

She flung herself on her friend's breast, embraced her frenziedly, and went away with her treasure.

The day of the party arrived. Madame Loisel was a success. She was the prettiest woman present, elegant, graceful, smiling, and quite above herself with happiness. All the men stared at her, inquired her name, and asked to be introduced to her. All the Under-Secretaries of State were eager to waltz with her. The Minister noticed her.

She left about four o'clock in the morning. Since midnight her husband had been dozing in a deserted little room, in company with three other men whose wives were having a good time.

He threw over her shoulders the garments he had brought for them to go home in, modest every-day clothes, whose poverty clashed with the beauty of the ball-dress. She was conscious of this and was

anxious to hurry away, so that she should not be noticed by the other women putting on their costly furs.

Loisel restrained her.

"Wait a little. You'll catch cold in the open. I'm going to fetch a cab."

But she did not listen to him and rapidly descended the staircase. When they were out in the street, they could not find a cab; they began to look for one, shouting at the drivers whom they saw passing in the distance.

They walked down towards the Seine, desperate and shivering. At last they found on the quay one of those old night-prowling carriages which are only to be seen in Paris after dark, as though they were ashamed of their shabbiness in the daylight.

It brought them to their door in the Rue des Martyrs, and sadly they walked up to their own apartment. It was the end, for her. As for him, he was thinking that he must be at the office at ten.

She took off the garments in which she had wrapped her shoulders, so as to see herself in all her glory before the mirror. But suddenly she uttered a cry. The necklace was no longer round her neck.

"What's the matter with you?" asked her husband, already half-undressed.

She turned towards him in the utmost distress.

"I.....I..... I've no longer got Madame Forestier's necklace....."

He started with astonishment.

"What?.....Impossible!"

They searched in the folds of her dress, in the folds of the coat, in the pockets, everywhere. They could not find it.

"Are you sure that you still had it on when you came away from the ball?" he asked.

"Yes, I touched it in the hall at the Ministry."

"But if you had lost it in the street, we should have heard it fall."

"Yes. Probably we should. Did you take the number of the cab?"

"No. You didn't notice it, did you?"

"No."

They stared at one another dumbfounded. At last Loisel put on his clothes again.

"I'll go over all the ground we walked," he said, "and see if I can't find it."

And he went out. She remained in her evening clothes lacking strength to get into bed, huddled on a chair, without volition or power of thought.

Her husband returned about seven. He had found nothing.

He went to the police station, to the newspapers, to offer a reward, to the cab companies, everywhere that a ray of hope impelled him.

She waited all day long, in the same state of bewilderment at this fearful catastrophe.

Loisel came home at night, his face lined and

pale; he had discovered nothing.

"You must write to your friend," he said, "and tell her that you've broken the clasp of her necklace and are getting it mended. That will give us time to look about us."

She wrote at his dictation.

By the end of a week they had lost all hope.

Loisel, who had aged five years, declared:

"We must see about replacing the diamonds."

Next day they took the box which had held the necklace and went to the jewellers whose name was inside. He consulted his books.

"It was not I who sold this necklace, Madame; I must have merely supplied the clasp."

Then they went from jeweller to jeweller, searching for another necklace like the first, consulting their memories, both ill with grief and despair.

In a shop at the Palais-Royal they found a string of diamonds which seemed to them exactly like the one they were looking for. It was worth forty thousand francs. They were allowed to have it for thirty-six thousand.

They begged the jeweller not to sell it for three days. And they arranged matters on the understanding that it would be taken back for thirty-four thousand francs, if the first one were found before the end of February.

Loisel possessed eighteen thousand francs left to him by his father. He intended to borrow the rest.

He did borrow it, getting a thousand from one man, five hundred from another, five louis here, three louis there. He gave notes of hand, entered into ruinous agreements, did business with usurers and the whole tribe of money-lenders. He mortgaged the whole remaining years of his existence, risked his signature without knowing if he could honour it, and, appalled at the agonising face of the future, at the black misery about to fall upon him, at the prospect of every possible physical privation and moral torture, he went to get the new necklace and put down upon the jeweller's counter thirty-six thousand francs.

When Madame Loisel took back the necklace to Madame Forestier, the latter said to her in a chilly voice:

"You ought to have brought it back sooner: I might have needed it."

She did not, as her friend had feared, open the case. If she had noticed the substituion, what would she have thought? What would she have said? Would she not have taken her for a thief?

Madame Loisel came to know the horrors of extreme poverty. From the very first she played her part heroically. This fearful debt must be paid off. She would pay it. The servant was dismissed. They changed their flat; they took a garret under the roof.

She came to know the heavy work of the house, the hateful duties of the kitchen. She washed the plates, wearing out her pink nails on the coarse pot-

tery and the bottoms of pans. She washed the dirty linen, the shirts and dish-cloths, and hung them out to dry on a string; every morning she took the dust-bin down into the street and carried up the water, stopping on each landing to get her breath. And, clad like a poor woman, she went to the fruiterer, to the grocer, to the butcher, a basket on her arm, haggling, insulted, fighting for every wretched halfpenny of her money.

Every month notes had to be paid off, others renewed, time gained.

Her husband worked in the evenings at putting straight a merchant's accounts, and often at night he did copying at two-pence-halfpenny a page.

And this life lasted ten years.

At the end of ten years everything was paid off, everything, the usurer's charges and the interest.

Madame Loisel looked old now. She had become like all the other strong, hard, coarse women of poor households. Her hair was badly done, her skirts were awry. Her hands were red. She spoke in a shrill voice, and the water slopped all over the floor when she scrubbed it. But sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she sat down by the window and thought of that evening long ago, of the ball at which she had been so beautiful and so much admired.

What would have happened if she had never lost those jewels? Who knows? Who knows? How strange life is, how fickle! How little is needed to ruin

or to save!.

One Sunday, as she had gone for a walk along the Champs-Elysees to freshen herself after the labours of the week, she caught sight suddenly of a woman who was taking a child out for a walk. It was Madame Forestier, still young, still beautiful, still attractive.

Madame Loisel was conscious of some emotion. Should she speak to her? Yes, certainly. And now that she had paid, she would tell her all. Why not?

She went up to her.

"Good morning, Jeanne."

The other did not recognize her, and was surprised at being thus familiarly addressed by a poor woman.

"But....Madame...." she stammered. "I don't know..... you must be making a mistake."

"No..... I am Mathilde Loisel."

Her friend uttered a cry.

"Oh.....my poor Mathilde, how you have changed....."

"Yes, I've had some hard times since I saw you last; and many sorrows....and all on your account."

"On my account!.... How was that?"

"You remember the diamond necklace you lent me for the ball at the Ministry?"

"Yes, Well?"

"Well, I lost it."

"How could you? Why, you brought it back."

"I brought you another one just like it. And for the last ten years we have been paying for it. You realise it wasn't easy for us; we had no money..... well, it's paid for at last, and I'm glad indeed."
well, it's paid for at last, and I'm glad indeed."

"You say you bought a diamond necklace to replace mine?"

"Yes. You hadn't noticed it? They were very much alike."

And she smiled in proud and innocent happiness. Madame Forestier, deeply moved, took her two hands.

"Oh, my poor Mathilde! But mine was imitation. It was worth at the very most five hundred francs!.."

THE BET

Anton Chekhov

It was a dark autumn night. The old banker was pacing from corner to corner of his study, recalling to his mind the party he gave in the autumn fifteen years before. There were many clever people at the party and much interesting conversation. They talked among other things of capital punishment. The guests, among them not a few scholars and journalists, for the most part disapproved of capital punishment. They found it obsolete as a means of punishment, unfitted to a Christian State, and immoral. Some of them thought that capital punishment should be replaced universally by life-imprisonment.

"I don't agree with you," said the host. "I myself have experienced neither capital punishment nor life-imprisonment, but if one may judge *a priori*, then in my opinion capital punishment is more moral and more humane than imprisonment. Execution kills instantly, life-imprisonment kills by degrees. Who is the more humane executioner, one who kills you in a few seconds or one who draws the life out of you incessantly, for years?"

"They are both equally immoral," remarked one of the guests, "because their purpose is the same, to take away life. The State is not God. It has no right to take away that which it cannot give back, if it should so desire."

Among the company was a lawyer, a young man of about twenty-five. On being asked his opinion, he said:

"Capital punishment and life-imprisonment are equally immoral; but if I were offered the choice between them, I would certainly choose the second. It's better to live somehow than not to live at all."

There ensued a lively discussion. The banker, who was then younger and more nervous suddenly lost his temper, banged his fist on the table, and turning to the young lawyer, cried out;

"It's a lie, I bet you two millions you wouldn't stick in a cell even for five years."

"If you mean it seriously," replied the lawyer, "then I bet I'll stay not five but fifteen."

"Fifteen! Done!" cried the banker. "Gentlemen, I stake two millions."

"Agreed, You stake two millions, I my freedom," said the lawyer.

So this wild, ridiculous bet came to pass. The banker, who at that time had too many millions to count, spoiled and capricious, was beside himself with rapture, During supper he said to the lawyer jokingly:

"Come to your senses, young man, before it's too late. Two millions are nothing to me, but you stand to lose three or four of the best years of your life. I say three or four because you'll never stick it out any longer. Don't forget either, you unhappy man, that voluntary is much heavier than enforced impri-

sonment. The idea that you have the right to free yourself at any moment will poison the whole of your life in the cell. I pity you."

And now the banker, pacing from corner to corner, recalled all this and asked himself:

"Why did I make this bet? What's the good? The lawyer loses fifteen years of his life and I throw away two millions. Will it convince people that capital punishment is worse or better than imprisonment for life? No, no! All stuff and rubbish. On my part, it was the caprice of a well-fed man; on the lawyer's, pure greed of gold."

He recollected further what happened after the evening party. It was decided that the lawyer must undergo his imprisonment under the strictest observation, in a garden wing of the banker's house. It was agreed that during the period he would be deprived of the right to cross the threshold, to see living people, to hear human voices, and to receive letters and newspapers. He was permitted to have a musical instrument, to read books, to write letters, to drink wine and smoke tobacco. By the agreement he could communicate, but only in silence, with the outside world through a little window specially constructed for this purpose. Everything nessary, books, music, wine, he could receive in any quantity by sending a note through the window. The agreement provided for all the minutest details, which made the

confinement strictly solitary, and it obliged the lawyer to remain exactly fifteen years from twelve o'clock of November, 14th, 1870, to twelve o'clock of November 14th, 1885. The least attempt on his part to violate the conditions, to escape if only for two minutes before the time, freed the banker from the obligation to pay him the two millions.

During the first year of imprisonment, the lawyer, as far as it was possible to judge from his short notes, suffered terribly from loneliness and boredom. From his wing day and night came the sound of the piano. He rejected wine and tobacco. "Wine," he wrote, "excites desires, and desires are the chief foes of a prisoner, besides, nothing is more boring than to drink good wine alone," and tobacco spoiled the air in his room. During the first year the lawyer was sent books of a light character; novels with a complicated love interest, stories of crime and fantasy, comedies and so on.

In the second year the piano was heard no longer and the lawyer asked only for classics. In the fifth year, music was heard again, and the prisoner asked for wine. Those who watched him said that during the whole of that year he was only eating, drinking, and lying on his bed. He yawned often and talked angrily to himself. Books he did not read. Sometimes at nights he would sit down to write. He would write for a long time and tear it all up in the morn-

ing. More than once he was heard to weep.

In the second half of the sixth year, the prisoner began zealously to study language, philosophy, and history. He fell on these subjects so hungrily that the banker hardly had time to get books enough for him. In the space of four years about six hundred volumes were bought at his request. It was while that passion lasted that the banker received the following letter from the prisoner: "My dear jailer, I am writing these lines in six languages. Show them to experts. Let them read them. If they do not find one single mistake I beg you to give orders to have a gun fired off in the garden. By the noise I shall know that my efforts have not been in vain. The geniuses of all ages and countries speak in different languages; but in them all burns the same flame. Oh, if you knew my heavenly happiness now that I can understand them!" The prisoner's desire was fulfilled. Two shots were fired in the garden by the banker's order.

Later on, after the tenth year, the lawyer sat immovable before his table and read only the New Testament. The banker found it strange that a man who in four years had mastered six hundred erudite volumes, should have spent nearly a year in reading one book, easy to understand and by no means thick. The New Testament was then replaced by the history of religions and theology.

During the last two years of his confinement the prisoner read an extraordinary amount, quite haphazard. Now he would apply himself to the natural sciences, then he would read Byron or Shakespears. Notes used to come from him in which he asked to be sent at the same time a book on chemistry, a textbook of medicine, a novel, and some treatise on philosophy or theology. He read as though he were swimming in the sea among broken pieces of wreckage, and in his desire to save his life was eagerly grasping one piece after another.

The banker recalled all this, and thought:

"To-morrow at twelve o'clock he receives his freedom. Under the agreement, I shall have to pay him two millions, if I pay, it's all over with me, I am ruined forever....."

Fifteen years before he had too many millions to count, but now he was afraid to ask himself which he had more of, money or debts. Gambling on the Stock-Exchange, risky speculation, and the recklessness of which he could not rid himself even in old age, had gradually brought his business to decay; and the fearless, self-confident, proud man of business had become an ordinary banker, trembling at every rise and fall in the market.

"That cursed bet," murmured the old man clutching his head in despair..... "Why didn't the man die? He's only forty years old. He will take away

my last farthing, marry, enjoy life, gamble on the Exchange, and I will look on like an envious beggar and hear the same words from him every day: 'I'm obliged to you for the happiness of my life. Let me help you.' No, it's too much! The only escape from bankruptcy and disgrace is that the man should die."

The clock had just struck three. The banker was listening. In the house everyone was asleep, and one could hear only the frozen trees whining outside the windows. Trying to make no sound he took out of his safe the key of the door which had not been opened for fifteen years, put on his overcoat, and went out of the house. The garden was dark and cold. It was raining. A damp, penetrating wind howled in the garden and gave the trees no rest. Though he strained his eyes, the banker could see neither the ground, nor the white statues, not the garden wing, nor the trees. Approaching the garden wing, he called the watchman twice. There was no answer. Evidently the watchman had taken shelter from the bad weather and was now asleep somewhere in the kitchen or the greenhouse.

"If I have the courage of fulfil my intention," thought the old man, "the suspicion will fall on the watchman first of all."

In the darkness he groped for the steps and the door and entered the hall of the garden-wing, then poked his way into a narrow passage and struck a

match. Not a soul was there. Some one's bed, with no bed-clothes on it, stood there, and an iron stove loomed dark in the corner. The seals on the door that led into the prisoner's room were unbroken.

When the match went out, the old man, trembling from agitation, peeped into the little window.

In the prisoner's room a candle was burning dimly. The prisoner himself sat by the table. Only his back, the hair on his head and his hands were visible. Open books were strewn about on the table, the two chairs, and on the carpet near the table.

Five minutes passed and the prisoner never once stirred. Fifteen years' confinement had taught him to sit motionless. The banker tapped on the window with his finger, but the prisoner made no movement in reply. Then the banker cautiously tore the seals from the door and put the key into the lock. The rusty lock gave a hoarse groan and the door creaked. The banker expected instantly to hear a cry of surprise and the sound of steps. Three minutes passed and it was as quiet inside as it had been before. He made up his mind to enter.

Before the table sat a man, unlike an ordinary human being. It was a skeleton, with tight-drawn skin, with long curly hair like a woman's, and a shaggy beard. The colour of his face was yellow, of an earthy shade; the cheeks were sunken, the back long and narrow, and the hand upon which he leaned

his hairy head was so lean and skinny that it was painful to look upon. His hair was already silvering with grey, and no one who glanced at the senile emaciation of the face would have believed that he was only forty years old. On the table, before his bended head lay a sheet of paper on which something was written in a tiny hand.

"Poor devil," thought the banker, "he's asleep and probably seeing millions in his dreams. I have only to take and throw this half-dead thing on the bed, smother him a moment with the pillow, and the most careful examination will find no trace of unnatural death. But, first, let us read what he has written here."

The banker took the sheet from the table and read:

"To-morrow at twelve o'clock midnight, I shall obtain my freedom and the right to mix with people. But before I leave this room and see the sun I think it necessary to say a few words to you. On my own clear conscience and before God who sees me I declare to you that I despise freedom, life, health, and all that your books call the blessings of the world.

"For fifteen years I have diligently studied earthly life. True, I saw neither the earth nor the people, but in your books I drank fragrant wine, sang songs, hunted deer and wild boar in the forests, loved women..... And beautiful women, like clouds ethe-

real, created by the magic of your poets' genius, visited me by night and whispered to me wonderful tales, which made my head drunken. In your books I climbed the summits of Elbruz and Mont Blanc and saw from there how the sun rose in the morning, and in the evening suffused the sky, the ocean and the mountain ridges with a purple gold. I saw from there how above me lightnings glimmered, cleaving the clouds; I saw green forests, fields, rivers, lakes, cities; I heard sirens singing, and the playing of the pipes of Pan; I touched the wings of beautiful devils who came flying to me to speak of God.....In your books I cast myself into bottomless abysses, worked miracles, burned cities to the ground, preached new religions, conquered whole countries.

"Your books gave me wisdom. All that unwearying human thought created in the centuries is compressed to a little lump in my skull. I know that I am cleverer than you all.

"And I despite your books, despise all worldly blessings and wisdom. Everything is void, frail, visionary and delusive as a mirage. Though you be proud and wise and beautiful, yet will death wipe you from the face of the earth like the mice underground; and your posterity, your history, and the immortality of your men of genius will be as frozen slag, burnt down together with the terrestrial globe.

"You are mad, and gone the wrong way. You

take falsehood for truth and ugliness for beauty. You would marvel if suddenly apple and orange trees should bear frogs and lizards instead of fruit, and if roses should begin to breathe the odour of a sweating horse. So do I marvel at you, who have bartered heaven for earth. I do not want to understand you.

"That I may show you in deed my contempt for that by which you live, I waive the two millions of which I once dreamed as of paradise and which I now despise. That I may deprive myself of my right to them, I shall come out from here five minutes before the stipulated term, and thus shall violate the agreement."

When he had read, the banker put the sheet on the table, kissed the head of the strange man, and began to weep. . He went out of the wing. Never at any other time, not even after his terrible losses on the Exchange, had he felt such contempt for himself as now. Coming home, he lay down on his bed, but agitation and tears kept him a long time from sleeping.....

The next morning the poor watchman came running to him and told him that they had seen the man who lived in the wing climb through the window into the garden. He had gone to the gate and disappeared. The banker instantly went with his servants to the wing and established the escape of his prisoner. To avoid unnecessary rumours he took the paper with the renunciation from the table and; on his return, locked it in his safe.

THE LADY OR THE TIGER ?

Frank R. Stockton

In the very olden time there lived a semi-barbaric king whose ideas, though somewhat polished and sharpened by the progressiveness of distant Latin neighbours, were still large, florid, and untrammelled, as became the half of him which was barbaric. He was a man of exuberant fancy, and, withal, of an authority so irresistible that, at his will, he turned his varied fancies into facts. He was greatly given to self-communing; and when he had himself agreed upon anything, the thing was done. When every member of his domestic and political systems moved smoothly in its appointed course, his nature was bland and genial; but whenever there was a little hitch, and some of his orbs got out of their orbits, he was blander and more genial still, for nothing pleased him so much as to make the crooked straight, and crush down uneven places.

Among the borrowed notions by which his barbarism expressed itself was that of the public arena, in which, by exhibitions of manly and beastly valour, the minds of his subjects were refined and cultured.

But even here the exuberant and barbaric fancy asserted itself. The arena of the king was built, not to give the people an opportunity of hearing the rhapsodies of dying gladiators, nor to enable them to

view the inevitable conclusion of a conflict between religious opinions and hungry jaws, but for purposes far better adapted to widen and develop the mental energies of the people. This vast amphitheatre, with its encircling galleries, its mysterious vaults, and its unseen passages, was an agent of poetic justice in which crime was punished, or virtue rewarded, by the decrees of an impartial and incorruptible chance.

When a subject was accused of a crime of sufficient importance to interest the king, public notice was given that on an appointed day the fate of the accused person would be decided in the king's arena—a structure which well deserved its name; for, although its form and plan were borrowed from afar, its purpose emanated solely from the brain of this man, who, every barley-corn a king, knew no tradition to which he owed more allegiance than pleased his fancy, and who ingrafted on every adopted form of human thought and action the rich growth of his barbaric idealism.

When all the people had assembled in the galleries, and the king, surrounded by his court, sat high up on his throne of royal state on one side of the arena, he gave a signal, a door beneath him opened, and the accused subject stepped out into the amphitheatre. Directly opposite him, on the other side of the enclosed space, were two doors, exactly alike and side by side. It was the duty and the privilege of the person on trial to walk directly to these two doors

and open one of them. He could open either door he pleased: he was subject to no guidance or influence but that of the aforementioned impartial and incorruptible chance. If he opened the one there came out of it a hungry tiger, the fiercest and most cruel that could be procured, which immediately sprang upon him, and tore him to pieces, as a punishment for his guilt. The moment that the case of the criminal was thus decided, doleful iron bells were clanged, great wails went up from the hired mourners posted on the outer rim of the arena, and the vast audience, with bowed heads and downcast hearts, wended slowly their homeward way, mourning greatly that one so young and fair, or so old and respected, should have merited so dire a fate.

But, if the accused person opened the other door, there came forth from it a lady, the most suitable to his years and station that his majesty could select among his fair subjects; and to this lady he was immediately married, as a reward of his innocence. It mattered not that he might already possess a wife and family; or that his affections might be engaged upon an object of his own selections; the king allowed no such subordinate arrangements to interfere with his great scheme of retribution and reward. The exercises, as in the other instance, took place immediately; and in the arena. Another door opened beneath the king, and a priest, followed by a band of choristers, and dancing maidens blowing joyous airs

on golden horns and treading an epithalamic measure, advanced to where the pair stood, side by side, and the wedding was promptly and cheerily solemnized. Then the gay brass bells rang forth their merry peals, the people shouted gay hurrahs, and the innocent man, preceded by children strewing flowers on his path, led his bride to his home.

This was the king's semi-barbaric method of administering justice. Its perfect fairness is obvious. The criminal could not know out of which door would come the lady: he opened either he pleased, without having the slightest knowledge whether, in the next instant, he was to be devoured or married. On some occasions the tiger came out of one door, and on some out of the other. The decisions of this tribunal were not only fair, they were positively determinate; the accused person was instantly punished if he found himself guilty; and, if innocent, he was rewarded on the spot, whether he liked it or not. There was no escape from the judgements of the king's arena.

The institution was a very popular one. When the people gathered together on one of the great trial days, they never knew whether they were to witness a bloody slaughter or a hilarious wedding. This element of uncertainty lent an interest to the occasion which it could not otherwise have attained. Thus the masses were entertained and pleased, and the thinking part of the community could bring no

charge of unfairness against this plan; for did not the accused person have the whole matter in his own hands?

This semi-barbaric king had a daughter as blooming as his most floried fancies, and with a soul as fervant and imperious as his own. As is usual in such cases, she was the apple of his eye, and was loved by him above all humanity. Among his courtiers was a young man of that fineness of blood and lowness of station common to the conventional heroes of romance who love royal maidens. This royal maiden was well satisfied with her lover, for he was handsome and brave to a degree, unsurpassed in all this kingdom; and she loved him with an ardour that had enough of barbarism in it to make it exceedingly warm and strong. This love affair moved on happily for many months, until one day the king happened to discover its existence. He did not hesitate nor waver in regard to his duty in the premises. The youth was immediately cast into prison, and a day was appointed for his trial in the king's arena. This, of course, was an especially important occasion; and his majesty as well as all the people was greatly interested in the workings and development of this trial. Never before had such a case occurred; never before had a subject dared to love the daughter of a king. In after years such things became commonplace enough; but then they were, in no slight degree, novel and startling.

The tiger cages of the kingdom were searched for the most savage and relentless beasts, from which the fiercest monster might be selected for the arena; and the ranks of maiden youth and beauty throughout the land were carefully surveyed by competent judges, in order that the young man might have a fitting bride in case fate did not determine for him a different destiny. Of course, everybody knew that the deed with which the accused was charged had been done. He had loved the princess, and neither he, she, nor any one else thought of denying the fact; but the king would not think of allowing any fact of this kind to interfere with the workings of the tribunal, in which he took great delight and satisfaction. No matter how the affair turned out, the youth would be disposed of; and the king would take an aesthetic pleasure in watching the course of events, which would determine whether or not the young man had done wrong in allowing himself to love the princess.

The appointed day arrived. From far and near the people gathered, and thronged the galleries of the arena; and the crowds unable to gain admittance, massed themselves against its outside walls. The king and his court were in their places opposite the twin doors—those fateful portals so terrible in their similarity. All was ready. The signal was given. A door beneath the royal party opened, and the lover of the princess walked into the arena. Tall, beautiful,

fair, his appearance was greeted with a low hum of admiration and anxiety. Half the audience had not known so grand a youth had lived among them. No wonder the princess loved him! What a terrible thing for him to be there!

As the youth advanced into the arena, he turned as the custom was to bow to the king; but he did not think at all of that royal personage; his eyes were fixed upon the princess who sat to the right of her father. Had it not been for the moiety of barbarism in her nature, it is probable that the lady would not have been there, but her intense and fervid soul would not allow her to be absent on an occasion in which she was terribly interested. From the moment the decree had gone forth that her lover should decide his fate in the king's arena, she had thought of nothing night or day but this great event and the various subjects connected with it. Possessed of more power, influence, and force of character than any one who had ever before been interested in such a case, she had done what no other person had done—she had possessed herself of the secret of the doors. She knew in which of the two rooms, that lay behind those doors, stood the cage of the tiger with its open front, and in which waited the lady. Through these thick doors, heavily curtained with skins on the inside, it was impossible that any noise or suggestion should come from within to the person who should approach to raise the latch of one of them; but gold

and the power of a woman's will had brought the secret to the princess.

And not only did she know in which room stood the lady ready to emerge, all blushing and radiant, should her door be opened, but she knew who the lady was. It was one of the fairest and loveliest of the damsels of the court who had been selected as the reward of the accused youth, should he be proved innocent of the crime of aspiring to one so far above him; and the princess hated her. Often had she seen, or imagined that she had seen, this fair creature throwing glances of admiration upon the person of her lover, and sometimes she thought these glances were perceived, and even returned. Now and then she had seen them talking together; it was but for a moment or two, but much can be said in a short space, it may have been on most unimportant topics, but how could she know that? The girl was lovely, but she had dared to raise her eyes to the loved one of the princess; and with all the intensity of the savage blood transmitted to her through long lines of wholly barbaric ancestors, she hated the woman who blushed and trembled behind that silent door.

When her lover turned and looked at her, and his eye met hers as she sat there paler and whiter than any one in the vast ocean of anxious faces about her, he saw, by that power of quick perception which is given to those whose souls are one, that she knew behind which door crouched the tiger, and behind

which stood the lady. He had expected her to know it. He understood her nature, and his soul was assured that she would never rest until she had made plain to herself this thing, hidden to all other lookers-on, even to the king. The only hope for the youth in which there was any element of certainty was based on the success of the princess in discovering this mystery; and the moment he looked upon her he saw she had succeeded, as in his soul he knew she would succeed.

Then it was that his quick and anxious glance asked the question, 'Which?' It was as plain to her as if he shouted it from where he stood. There was not an instant to be lost. The question was asked in a flash; it must be answered in another.

Her right arm lay on the cushioned parapet before her. She raised her hand, and made a slight, quick movement towards the right. No one but her lover saw her. Every eye but his was fixed on the man in the arena. He turned, and with a firm and rapid step he walked across the empty space. Every heart stopped beating, every breath was held, every eye was fixed immovable upon that man. Without the slightest hesitation he went to the door on the right and opened it.

Now, the point of the story is this: Did the tiger come out of that door, or did the lady? The more we reflect upon this question, the harder it is to answer. It involves a study of the human heart which leads us

through devious mazes of passion, out of which it is difficult to find our way. Think of it, fair reader, not as if the decision of the question depended upon yourself, but upon that hot-blooded semi-barbaric princess, her soul at a white heat beneath the combined fires of despair and jealousy. She had lost him, but who should have him? How often, in her waking hours and in her dreams, had she started in wild horror, and covered her face with her hands, as she thought of her lover opening the door on the other side of which waited the cruel fangs of the tiger; But how much oftener had she seen him at the other door! How in her grievous reveries had she gnashed her teeth, and torn her hair, when she saw his start of rapturous delight as he opened the door of the lady? How her soul had burned in agony when she had seen him rush to meet that woman, with her flushing cheek and sparking eye of triumph; when she had seen him lead her forth, his whole frame kindled with the joy of recovered life; when she had heard the glad shouts from the multitude, and the wild ringing of the happy bells; when she had seen the priest, with his joyous followers, advance to the couple, and make them man and wife before her very eyes; and when she had seen them walk away together upon their path of flowers, followed by the tremendous shouts of the hilarious multitude, in which her one despairing shriek was lost and drowned! Would it not be better for him to die at once and go to wait

for her in the blessed regions of semi-barbaric futurity? And yet, that awful tiger, those shrieks, that blood!

Her decision had been indicated in an instant, but it had been made after days and nights of anguished deliberation. She had known she would be asked and she had decided what she would answer, and, without the slightest hesitation, she had moved her hand to the right. The question of her decision is not one to be lightly considered, and it is not for me to presume to set myself up as the one person able to answer it. And so I leave it with all of you: Which came out of the opened door—the lady, or the tiger?

THE MAGIC SHOP

H.G. Wells

I had seen the Magic Shop from afar several times; I had passed it once or twice, a shop window of alluring little objects, magic balls, magic hens, wonderful cones, ventriloquist dolls, the material of the basket trick, packs of cards that looked all right, and all that sort of thing, but never had I thought of going in until one day, almost without warning, Gip hauled me by my finger right up to the window, and so conducted himself that there was nothing for it but to take him in. I had not thought the place was there, to tell the truth—a modest-sized frontage in Regent Street, between the picture shop and the place where the chicks run about just out of patent incubators,—but there it was sure enough. I had fancied it was down nearer the Circus, or round the corner in Oxford Street, or even in Holborn; always over the way and a little inaccessible it had been, with something of the mirage in its position; but here it was now quite indisputably, and the fat end of Gip's pointing finger made a noise upon the glass.

"If I was rich," said Gip, dabbing a finger at the Disappearing Egg. "I'd buy myself that. And that"—which was The Crying Baby, Very Human—"and that," which was a mystery, and called, so a neat card asserted, "Buy One and Astonish your Friends."

"Anything," said Gip, "will disappear under one

of those cones. I have read about it in a book.

"And there, dadda, is the Vanishing Halfpenny—only they've put it this way up so's we can't see how it's done."

Gip, dear boy, inherits his mother's breedling, and he did not propose to enter the shop or worry in any way; only, you know, quite unconsciously he lugged my finger doorward, and he made his interest clear.

"That," he said, and pointed to the Magic Bottle.

"If you had that?" I said; at which promising inquiry he looked up with a sudden radiance.

"I could show it to Jessie," he said, thoughtful as ever of others.

"It's less than a hundred days to your birthday, Gibbles," I said, and laid my hand on the door-handle.

Gip made no answer, but his grip tightened on my finger, and so we came into the shop.

It was no common shop this; it was a magic shop, and all the prancing precedence Gip would have taken in the matter of mere toys was wanting. He left the burthen of the conversation to me.

It was a little, narrow shop, not very well lit, and the door-bell pinged again with a plaintive note as we closed it behind us. For a moment or so we were alone and could glance about us. There was a tiger in *papier-mache* on the glass case that covered the low counter—a grave, kind-eyed tiger that waggled his head in a methodical manner; there were several

crystal spheres, a china hand holding magic cards, a stock of magic fish-bowls in various sizes, and an immodest magic hat that shamelessly displayed its springs. On the floor were magic mirrors; one to draw you out long and thin, one to swell your head and vanish your legs, and one to make you short and fat like a draught; and while we were laughing at these the shopman, as I suppose, came in.

At any rate, there he was behind the counter—a curious, sallow, dark man, with one ear larger than the other and a chin like the toe-cap of a boot.

"What can we have the pleasure?" he said spreading his long, magic fingers on the glass case; and so with a start we were aware of him.

"I want," I said, "to buy my little boy a few simple tricks."

"Legerdemain?" he asked, "Mechanical? Domestic?".

"Anything amusing," said I.

"Um!" said the shopman, and scratched his head for a moment as if thinking. Then, quite distinctly, he drew from his head a glass ball. "Something in this way?" he said, and held it out.

The action was unexpected. I had seen the trick done at entertainments endless times before—it's part of the common stock of conjurers—but I had not expected it here. "That's good," I said, with a laugh.

"Isn't it?" said the shopman.

Gip stretched out his disengaged hand to take this object and found merely a blank palm.

"It's in your pocket," said the shopman, and there it was!

"How much will that be?" I asked.

"We make no charge for glass balls," said the shopman. "We get them"—he picked one out of his elbow as he spoke—"free". He produced another from the back of his neck, and laid it beside its predecessor on the counter. Gip regarded his glass ball sagely, then directed a look of inquiry at the two on the counter, and finally brought his round-eyed scrutiny to the shop-man who smiled. "You may have those too," said the shopman, "and, if you *don't* mind, one from my mouth. *So!*"

Gip counselled me mutely for a moment, and then in a profound silence put away the four balls, resumed my reassuring finger, and nerved himself for the next event.

"We get all our smaller tricks in that way," the shopman remarked.

I laughed in the manner of one who subscribes to a jest. "Instead of going to the wholesale shop," I said. "Of course, it's cheaper."

"In a way," the shopman said. "Though we pay in the end. But not so heavily—as people suppose... Our larger tricks, and our daily provisions and all the other things we want, we get out of that hat..And

you know, sir, if you'll excuse my saying it, there isn't a wholesale shop, not for Genuine Magic goods, sir. I don't know if you noticed our inscription—the Genuine Magic shop." He drew a business-card from his cheek and handed it to me. "Genuine," he said, with his finger on the word, and added, "there is absolutely no deception, sir."

He seemed to be carrying out the joke pretty thoroughly, I thought.

He turned to Gip with a smile of remarkable affability. "You, you know, are the Right Sort of Boy."

I was surprised at his knowing that, because, in the interests of discipline, we keep it rather a secret even at home; but Gip received it in unflinching silence, keeping a steadfast eye on him.

"It's only the Right Sort of Boy gets through that doorway."

And, as if by way of illustration, there came a rattling at the door, and a squeaking little voice could be faintly heard, "Nyar; I *warn'a* go in there, dadda, I WARN 'a go in there. Ny-a-a-ah!" and then the accents of a down-trodden parent, urging consolations and propitiations. "It's locked, Edward," he said.

"But it isn't," said I.

"It is, sir," said the shopman, "always—for that sort of child," and as he spoke we had a glimpse of the other youngster, a little, white face, pallid from

sweet-eating and over-sapid food, and distorted by evil passions, a ruthless little egotist, pawing at the enchanted pane. "It's no good, sir," said the shopman, as I moved, with my natural helpfulness, doorward, and presently the spoilt child was carried off howling.

"How do you manage that?" I said, breathing a little more freely.

"Magic!" said the shopman, with a careless wave of the hand, and behold! sparks of coloured fire flew out of his fingers and vanished into the shadows of the shop.

"You were saying," he said, addressing himself to Gip, "before you came in, that you would like one of our 'Buy One and Astonish your Friends' boxes?"

Gip, after a gallant effort, said "Yes".

"It's in your pocket."

And leaning over the counter—he really had an extraordinarily long body—this amazing person produced the article in the customary conjurer's manner. "Paper," he said, and took a sheet out of the empty hat with the springs; "string," and behold his mouth was a string-box, from which he drew an unending thread, which when he had tied his parcel he bit off—and, it seemed to me, swallowed the ball of string. And then he lit a candle at the nose of one of the ventriloquist's dummies, stuck one of his fingers (which had become sealing-wax red) into the flame, and so sealed the parcel. "Then there was the Dis-

appearing Egg," he remarked, and produced one from within my coat-breast and packed it, and also The Crying Baby, Very Human. I handed each parcel to Gip as it was ready, and he clasped them to his chest.

He said very little, but his eyes were eloquent; the clutch of his arms was eloquent. He was the playground of unspeakable emotions. These, you know, were *real* Magics.

Then, with a start, I discovered something moving about in my hat—something soft and jumpy. I whipped it off, and a ruffled pigeon—no doubt a confederate—dropped out and ran on the counter, and went, I fancy, into a cardboard box behind the *papier-mache* tiger.

"Tut, tut!" said the shopman, dexterously relieving me of my headdress; "careless bird, and—as I live—nesting!"

He shook my hat, and shook out into his extended hand two or three eggs, a large marble, a watch, about half-a-dozen of the inevitable glass balls, and then crumpled, crinkled paper, more and more and more, talking all the time of the way in which people neglect to brush their hats inside as well as out, politely, of course, but with a certain personnal application. "All sorts of things accumulate, sir....Not *you*, of course, in particular....Nearly every customer....Astonishing what they carry about with them.." The crumpled paper rose and billowed on the counter more and more

and more, until he was nearly hidden from us, until he was altogether hidden, and still his voice went on and on. "We none of us know what the fair semblance of a human being may conceal, sir. Are we all then no better than brushed exteriors, whited sepulchres—".

His voice stopped—exactly like when you hit a neighbour's gramophone with a well-aimed brick, the same instant silence, and the rustle of the paper stopped, and everything was still....

"Have you done with my hat?" I said, after an interval.

There was no answer.

I stared at Gip, and Gip stared at me, and there were our distortions in the magic mirrors, looking very rum, and grave, and quiet....

"I think we'll go now", I said. "Will you tell me how much all this comes to?

"I say," I said, on a rather louder note," I want the bill; and my hat, please."

It might have been a sniff from behind the paper pile....

"Let's look behind the counter, Gip," I said. "He's making fun of us."

I led Gip round the head-wagging tiger, and what do you think there was behind the counter? No one at all! Only my hat on the floor, and a common conjurer's lopeared white rabbit lost in meditation, and

looking as stupid and crumpled as only a conjurer's rabbit can do. I resumed my hat, and the rabbit lolloped a lollop or so out of my way.

"Dadda!" said Gip, in a guilty whisper.

"What is it, Gip?" said I.

"I *do* like this shop, dadda."

"So should I," I said to myself, "if the counter wouldn't suddenly extend itself to shut one off from the door." But I didn't call Gip's attention to that. "Pussy!" he said, with a hand out to the rabbit as it came lolloping past us; "Pussy, do Gip a magic!" and his eyes followed it as it squeezed through a door I had certainly not remarked a moment before. Then this door opened wider, and the man with one ear larger than the other appeared again. He was smiling still, but his eye met mine with something between amusement and defiance. "You'd like to see our show-room, sir," he said, with an innocent suavity. Gip tugged my finger forward. I glanced at the counter and met the shopman's eye again. I was beginning to think the magic just a little too genuine. "We haven't very much time," I said. But somehow we were inside the show-room before I could finsh that.

"All goods of the same quality," said the shopman, rubbing his flexible hands together, "and that is the Best. Nothing in the place that isn't genuine Magic, and warranted thoroughly rum. Excuse me, sir!"

I felt him pull at something that clung to my coat-sleeve, and then I saw he held a little, wriggling red demon by the tail—the little creature bit and fought and tried to get at his hand—and in a moment he tossed it carelessly behind a counter. No doubt the thing was only an image of twisted indiarubber, but for the moment—! And his gesture was exactly that of a man who handles some petty biting bit of vermin. I glanced at Gip, but Gip was looking at a magic rocking-horse. I was glad he hadn't seen the thing. "I say," I said, in an undertone, and indicating Gip and the red demon with my eyes, "you haven't many things like *that* about, have you?"

"None of ours! Probably brought it with you," said the shopman—also in an undertone, and with a more dazzling smile than ever. "Astonishing what people will carry about with them unawares!" And then to Gip, "Do you see anything you fancy here?"

There were many things that Gip fancied there.

He turned to this astonishing tradesman with mingled confidence and respect. "Is that a Magic Sword?" he said:

"A Magic Toy Sword. It neither bends, breaks, nor cuts the fingers. It renders the bearer invincible in battle against any one under eighteen. Half-a-crown to seven and six pence, according to size. These panoplies on cards are for juvenile knights-errant and very useful—shield of safety, sandals of

swiftness, helmet of invisibility."

"Oh, daddy!" gasped Gip.

I tried to find out what they cost, but the shopman did not heed me. He had got Gip now; he had got him away from my finger; he had embarked upon the exposition of all his confounded stock, and nothing was going to stop him. Presently I saw with a qualm of distrust and something very like jealousy that Gip had hold of this person's finger as usually he has hold of mine. No doubt the fellow was interesting, I thought, and had an interestingly faked lot of stuff, really good faked stuff, still—

I wandered after them, saying very little, but keeping an eye on this prestidigital fellow. After all, Gip was enjoying it. And no doubt when the time came to go we should be able to go quite easily.

It was a long, rambling place, that show-room, a gallery broken up by stands and stalls and pillars, with archways leading off to other departments, in which the queerest-looking assistants loafed and stared at one, and with perplexing mirrors and curtains. So perplexing, indeed, were these that I was presently unable to make out the door by which we had come.

The shopman showed Gip magic trains that ran without steam or clockwork, just as you set the signals, and then some very, very valuable boxes of soldiers that all came alive directly you took off the

lid and said—. I myself haven't a very quick ear and it was a tongue-twisting sound, but Gip—he has his mother's ear—got it in no time. "Bravo!" said the shopman, putting the men back into the box unceremoniously and handing it to Gip. "Now," said the shopman, and in a moment Gip had made them all alive again.

"You'll take that box?" asked the shopman.

"We'll take that box," said I, "unless you charge its full value. In which case it would need a Trust Magnate—".

"Dear heart! No!" and the shopman swept the little men back again, shut the lid, waved the box in the air, and there it was, in brown paper, tied up and—with Gip's full name and address on the paper!

The shopman laughed at my amazement.

"This is the genuine magic," he said. "The real thing."

"It's a little too genuine for my taste," I said again.

After that he fell to showing Gip tricks, odd tricks, and still odder the way they were done. He explained them, he turned them inside out, and there was the dear little chap nodding his busy bit of a head in the sagest manner.

I did not attend as well as I might. "Hey, presto!" said the Magic Shopman, and then would come the clear, small "Hey, presto!" of the boy. But I was

distracted by other things. It was being borne in upon me just how tremendously rum this place was; it was, so to speak, inundated by a sense of rumness. There was something a little rum about the fixtures even, about the ceiling, about the floor, about the casually distributed chairs. I had a queer feeling that whenever I wasn't looking at them straight they went askew, and moved about, and played a noiseless puss-in-the-corner behind my back. And the cornice had a serpentine design with masks—masks altogether too expressive for proper plaster.

Then abruptly my attention was caught by one of the odd-looking assistants. He was some way off and evidently unaware of my presence—I saw a sort of three-quarter length of him over a pile of toys and through an arch—and, you know, he was leaning against a pillar in an idle sort of way doing the most horried things with his features! The particular horrid thing he did was with his nose. He did it just as though he was idle and wanted to amuse himself. First of all it was a short, blobby nose, and then suddenly he shot it out like a telescope, and then out it flew and became thinner and thinner until it was like a long, red, flexible whip. Like a thing in a nightmare in was! He flourished it about and flung it forth as a fly-fisher flings his line.

My instant thought was that Gip mustn't see him. I turned about, and there was Gip quite preoccupied

with the shopman, and thinking no evil. They were whispering together and looking at me. Gip was standing on a little stool, and the shopman was holding a sort of big drum in his hand.

"Hide and seek, dadda!" cried Gip. "You're He!" And before I could do anything to prevent it, the shopman had clapped the big drum over him.

I saw what was up directly. "Take that off," I cried, "this instant! You'll frighten the boy. Take it off!"

The shopman with the unequal ears did so without a word, and held the big cylinder towards me to show its emptiness. And the little stool was vacant! In that instant my boy had utterly disappeared?.....

"You know, perhaps, that sinister something that comes like a hand out of the unseen and grips your heart about. You know it takes your common self away and leaves you tense and deliberate, neither slow nor hasty, neither angry nor afraid. So it was with me.

I came up to this grinning shopman and kicked his stool aside.

"Stop this folly!" I said. "Where is my boy?"

"You see," he said, still displaying the drum's interior, "there is no deception—"

I put out my hand to grip him, and he eluded me by a dexterous movement. I snatched again, and he turned from me and pushed open a door to escape.

"Stop!" I said, and he laughed, receding. I leapt after him—into utter darkness.

Thud!

"Lor' bless my 'eart!! I didn't see you coming, sir!"

I was in Regent Street, and I had collided with a decent-looking working man; and a yard away, perhaps, and looking a little perplexed with himself, was Gip. There was some sort of apology, and then Gip had turned and come to me with a bright little smile, as though for a moment he had missed me.

And he was carrying four parcels in his arm!

He secured immediate possession of my finger.

For the second I was rather at a loss. I stared round to see the door of the Magic shop, and, behold, it was not there! There was no door, no shop, nothing, only the common pilaster between the shop where they sell pictures and the window with the chicks!...

I did the only thing possible in that mental tumult; I walked straight to the kerbstone and held up my umbrella for a cab.

"'Ansoms," said Gip, in a note of culminating exultation.

I helped him in, recalled my address with an effort, and got in also. Something unusual proclaimed itself in my tail-coat pocket, and I felt and discovered a glass ball. With a petulant expression I flung it into the street.

Gip said nothing.

For a space neither of us spoke.

"Dadda!" said Gip, at last, "that *was* a proper shop!" I came round with that to the problem of just how the whole thing had seemed to him. He looked completely undamaged—so far, good; he was neither scared nor unhinged, he was simply tremendously satisfied with the afternoon's entertainment, and there in his arms were the four parcels.

Confound it! what could be in them?

"Um!" I said. "Little boys can't go to shops like that every day."

He received this with his usual stoicism, and for a moment I was sorry I was his father and not his mother, and so couldn't suddenly there, in our hansom, kiss him. After all, I thought, the thing wasn't so very bad.

But it was only when we opened the parcels that I really began to be reassured. Three of them contained boxes of soldiers, quite ordinary lead soldiers, but of so good a quality as to make Gip altogether forget that originally these parcels had been Magic of the only genuine sort, and the fourth contained a kitten, a little living white kitten, in excellent health and appetite and temper.

I saw this unpacking with a sort of provisional relief. I hung about in the nursery for quite an unconscionable time....

That happened six months ago. And now I am

beginning to believe it is all right. The kitten had only the magic natural to all kittens, and the soldiers seem as steady a company as any colonel could desire. And Gip—?

The intelligent parent will understand that I have to go cautiously with Gip. But I went so far as this one day. I said, "How would you like your soldiers to come alive, Gip, and march about by themselves?"

"Mine do," said Gip. "I just have to say a word I know before I open the lid."

"Then they march about alone?"

"Oh, quite, dadda. I shouldn't like them if they didn't do that."

I displayed no unbecoming surprise, and since then I have taken occasion to drop in upon him once or twice, unannounced, when the soldiers were about, but so far I have never discovered them performing in any thing like a magical manner.....

It's so difficult to tell.

There's also a question of finance. I have an incurable habit of paying bills. I have been up and down Regent Street several times, looking for that shop. I am inclined to think, indeed, that in that matter honour is satisfied and that, since Gip's name and address are known to them, I may very well leave it to these people, whoever they may be, to send in their bill in their own time.

A HARLEM TRAGEDY

O. Henry

Mrs. Fink has dropped into Mrs. Cassidy's flat one flight below.

"Ain't it a beaut?" said Mrs. Cassidy.

She turned her face proudly for her friend Mrs. Fink to see. One eye was nearly closed, with a great, greenish-purple bruise around it. Her lip was cut and bleeding a little and there were red finger-marks on each side of her neck.

"My husband wouldn't ever think of doing that to me," said Mrs. Fink, concealing her envy.

"I wouldn't have a man," declared Mrs. Cassidy, "that didn't beat me up at least once a week. Shows he thinks something of you. Say! but that last dose Jack gave me wasn't no homœpathic one. I can see stars yet. But he'll be the sweetest man in town for the rest of the week to make up for it. This eye is good for theatre tickets and a silk shirt waist at the very least."

"I should hope", said Mrs. Fink assuming complacency,, "that Mr. Fink is too much of a gentleman ever to raise his hand against me."

"Oh, go on, Maggie!" said Mrs. Cassidy, laughing and applying wych-hazel, "you're only jealous. Your old man is too frapped and slow to ever give you a punch. He just sits down and practises physical culture with a newspaper when he comes home—now ain't that the truth?"

"Mr. Fink certainly peruses of the papers when he comes home," acknowledged Mrs. Fink, with a toss of her head; "but he certainly don't ever make no Steve O'Donnell out of me just to amuse himself—that's a sure thing."

Mrs. Cassidy laughed the contented laugh of the guarded and happy matron. With the air of Cornelia exhibiting her jewels, she drew down the collar of her kimono and revealed another treasured bruise, maroon-coloured, edged with olive and orange—a bruise now nearly well, but still to memory dear.

Mrs. Fink capitulated. The formal light in her eye softened to envious admiration. She and Mrs. Cassidy had been chums in the down-town paper-box factory before they had married, one year before. Now she and her man occupied the flat above Mame and her man. Therefore she could not put on airs with Mame.

"Don't it hurt when he soaks you?" asked Mrs. Fink curiously.

"Hurt!"—Mrs. Cassidy gave a soprano scream of delight. "Well, say—did you ever have a brick house fall on you?—well, that's just the way it feels—just like when they're digging you out of the ruins. Jack's got a left that spells two matinees and a new pair of Oxfords—and his right!—well, it takes a trip to Coney and six pairs of open-work, silk lisle threads to make that good."

"But what does he beat you for?" inquired Mrs. Fink, with wide-open eyes.

"Silly!" said Mrs. Cassidy, indulgently. "Why, because he's full. It's generally on Saturday nights."

"But what cause do you give him?" persisted the seeker after knowledge.

"Why, didn't I marry him? Jack comes in tanked up; and I'm here, ain't I? Who else has he got a right to beat? I'd just like to catch him once beating anybody else! Sometimes it's because supper ain't ready; and sometimes it's because it is. Jack ain't particular about causes. He just lushes till he remembers he's married, and then he makes for home and does me up. Saturday nights I just move the furniture with sharp corners out of the way, so I won't cut my head when he gets his work in. He's got a left swing that jars you! Sometimes I take the count in the first round; but when I feel like having a good time during the week, or want some new rags, I come up again for more punishment. That's what I done last night. Jack knows I've been wanting a black silk waist for a month, and I did't think just one black eye would bring it. Tell you what, Mag, I'll bet you the ice cream he brings it to-night."

Mrs. Fink was thinking deeply.

"My Mart," she said, "never hit me a lick in his life. It's just like you said, Mame; he comes in grouchy and ain't got a word to say. He never takes

me out anywhere. He's a chair-warmer at home for fair. He buys me things, but he looks so glum about it that I never appreciate 'em."

Mrs. Cassidy slipped an arm around her chum.

"You poor thing!" she said. "But everybody can't have a husband like Jack. Marriage wouldn't be no failure if they was all like him. These discontented wives you hear about—what they need is a man to come home and kick their slats in once a week, and then make it up in kisses, and chocolate creams. That'd give 'em some interest in life. What I want is a masterful man that slugs you when he's jagged and hugs you when he ain't jagged. Preserve me from the man that ain't got the sand to do neither!"

Mrs. Fink sighed.

The hallways were suddenly filled with sound. The door flew open at the kick of Mr. Cassidy. His arms were occupied with bundles. Mame flew and hung about his neck. Her sound eye sparkled with the love-light that shines in the eye of the Maori maid when she recovers consciousness in the hut of the wooer who has stunned and dragged her there.

"Hello, old girl!" shouted Mr. Cassidy. He shed his bundles and lifted her off her feet in a mighty hug. "I got tickets for Barnum & Bailey's, and if you'll bust the string of one of them bundles I guess you'll find that silk waist—why, good evening, Mrs. Fink, I didn't see you at first. How's old Mart coming along?"

"He's very well, Mr. Cassidy—thanks," said Mrs. Fink. "I must be going along up now. Mart'll be home for supper soon. I'll bring you down that pattern you wanted to-morrow, Mame."

Mrs. Fink went up to her flat and had a little cry. It was a meaningless cry, the kind of cry that only a woman knows about, a cry from no particular cause, altogether an absurd cry; the most transient and the most hopeless cry in the repertory of grief. Why had Martin never thrashed her? He was as big and strong as Jack Cassidy. Did he not care for her at all? He never quarrelled; he came home and lounged about, silent, glum, idle. He was a fairly good provider, but he ignored the spices of life.

Mrs. Fink's ship of dreams was becalmed. Her captain ranged between plum-duff and his hammock. If only he would shiver his timbers or stamp his foot on the quarter-deck now and then! And she had thought to sail so merrily, touching at ports in the Delectable Isles! But now, to vary the figure, she was ready to throw up the sponge, tired out, without a scratch to show for all those tame rounds with her sparring partner. For one moment she almost hated Mame—Mame, with her cuts and bruises, her salve of presents and kisses; her stormy voyage with her fighting, brutal, loving mate.

Mr. Fink came home at 7. He was permeated with the curse of domesticity. Beyond the portal of

his cozy home he cared not to roam. He was the man who had caught the street-car, the anaconda that had swallowed its prey, the tree that lay as it had fallen.

"Like the supper, Mart?" asked Mrs. Fink, who had striven over it.

"M-m-m-yep," grunted Mr. Fink.

After supper he gathered his newspapers to read. He sat in his stockinged feet.

The next day was Labour Day. The occupations of Mr. Cassidy and Mr. Fink ceased for one passage of the sun. Labour, triumphant, would parade and otherwise disport itself.

Mrs. Fink took Mrs. Cassidy's pattern down early. Mame had on her new silk waist. Even her damaged eye managed to emit a holiday gleam. Jack was fruitfully penitent, and there was a hilarious scheme for the day afoot, with parks and picnics in it.

A rising, indignant jealousy seized Mrs. Fink as she returned to her flat above. Oh, happy Mame, with her bruises and her quick-following balm! But was Mame to have a monopoly of happiness? Surely Martin Fink was as good a man as Jack Cassidy. Was his wife to go always unbelaboured and uncaressed? A sudden, brilliant breathless idea came to Mrs. Fink. She would show Mame that there were husbands as able to use their fists and perhaps to be as tender afterward as any Jack.

The holiday promised to be a nominal one with

the Finks. Mrs. Fink had the stationary wash-tubs in the kitchen filled with a two-weeks' wash that had been soaking overnight. Mr. Fink sat in his stocking-ed feet reading a newspaper. Thus Labour Day presaged to speed.

Jealousy surged high in Mrs. Fink's heart and higher still surged an audacious resolve. If her man would not strike her—if he would not so far prove his manhood, his prerogative and his interest in conjugal affairs, he must be prompted to his duty.

Mr. Fink lit his pipe and peacefully rubbed an ankle with a stockinged toe. He reposed in the state of matrimony like a limp of unblended suet in a pudding. This was his level Elysium—to sit at ease vicariously girdling the world in print amid the wifely splashing of suds and the agreeable smells of breakfast dishes departed and dinner ones to come. Many ideas were far from his mind; but the furthest one was the thought of beating his wife.

Mrs. Fink turned on the hot water and set the washboards in the suds. Up from the flat below came the gay laugh of Mrs. Cassidy. It sounded like a taunt, a flaunting of her own happiness in the face of the unslugged bride above. Now was Mrs. Fink's time.

Suddenly she turned like a fury upon the man reading.

"You lazy loafer!" she cried, "must I work my

arms off washing and toiling for the ugly likes of you? Are you a man or are you a kitchen hound?"

Mr. Fink dropped his paper, motionless from surprise. She feared that he would not strike—that the provocation had been insufficient. She leaped at him and struck him fiercely in the face with her clenched hand. In that instant she felt a thrill of love for him such as she had not felt for many a day. Rise up Martin Fink, and come into your kingdom! Oh, she must feel the weight of his hand now—just to show that he cared—just to show that he cared!

Mr. Fink sprang to his feet—Maggie caught him again on the jaw with a wide swing of her other hand. She closed her eyes in that fearful, blissful moment before his blow should come—she whispered his name to herself—she leaned to the expected shock, hungry for it.

In the flat below, Mr. Cassidy, with a shamed and contrite face, was powdering Mame's eye in preparation for their junket. From the flat above came the sound of a woman's voice, high-raised, a bumping, a stumbling and a shuffling, a chair overturned—unmistakable sounds of domestic conflict.

"Mart and Mag scrapping?" postulated Mr. Cassidy. "Didn't know they ever indulged. Shall I trot up and see if they need a sponge-holder?"

One of Mrs. Cassidy's eyes sparkled like a diamond. The other twinkled at least like paste.

"Oh, oh," she said, softly and without apparent meaning, in the feminine ejaculatory manner. "I wonder if—I wonder if! Wait, Jack, till I go up and see."

Up the stairs she sped. As her foot struck the hallway above, out from the kitchen door of her flat wildly flounced Mrs. Fink.

"Oh, Maggie," cried Mrs. Cassidy, in a delighted whisper; "did he? Oh, did he?"

Mrs. Fink ran and laid her face upon her chum's shoulder and sobbed hopelessly.

Mrs. Cassidy took Maggie's face between her hands and lifted it gently. Tear-stained it was, flushing and paling, but its velvety, pink-and-white, becomingly freckled surface was unscratched, unbruised, unmarred by the recreant fist of Mr. Fink.

"Tell me, Maggie," pleaded Mame, "or I'll go in there and find out. What was it? Did he hurt you—what did he do?"

Mrs. Fink's face went down again despairingly on the bosom of her friend.

"For God's sake don't open that door, Mame," she sobbed. "And don't ever tell nobody—keep it under your hat. He—he never touched me, and—he's—oh, Gawd—he's washin' the clothes—he's washin' the clothes!"

IMPULSE

Conrad Aiken

Michael Lowes hummed as he shaved, amused by the face he saw—the pallid, asymmetrical face, with the right eye so much higher than the left, and its eyebrow so peculiarly arched, like a "v" turned upside down. Perhaps this day wouldn't be as bad as the last. In fact, he knew it wouldn't be, and that was why he hummed. This was the bi-weekly day of escape, when he would stay out for the evening, and play bridge with Hurwitz, Bryant, and Smith. Should he tell Dora at the breakfast table? No, better not. Particularly in view of last night's row about unpaid bills. And there would be more of them, probably, beside his plate. The rent. The coal. The doctor who had attended to the children. Jeez, what a life. Maybe it was time to do a new jump. And Dora was beginning to get restless again.

But he hummed, thinking of the bridge game. Not that he liked Hurwitz or Bryant or Smith—cheap fellows, really—mere pick-up acquaintances. But what could you do about making friends, when you were always hopping about from one place to another, looking for a living, and fate always against you! They were all right enough. Good enough for a little escape, a little party—and Hurwitz always provided good alcohol. Dinner at the Greek's and then to Smith's room—yes. He would wait till late in the afternoon,

and then telephone to Dora as if it had all come up suddenly. Hello, Dora—is that you, old girl? Yes, this is Michael—Smith has asked me to drop in for a hand of bridge—you know—so I'll just have a little snack in town. Home by the last car as usual. Yes, ...Good-bye!....

And it all went off perfectly, too. Dora was quiet, at breakfast, but not hostile. The pile of bills was there, to be sure, but nothing was said about them. And while Dora was busy getting the kids ready for school, he managed to slip out, pretending that he thought it was later than it really was. Pretty neat, that! He hummed again, as he waited for the train. Telooralooraloo. Let the bills wait, damn them! A man couldn't do everything at once, could he, when bad luck hounded him everywhere? And if he could just get a little night off, now and then, a rest and courage, a little diversion, what was the harm in that?

At half-past four he rang up Dora and broke the news to her. He wouldn't be home till late.

"Are you sure you'll be home at all?" she said coolly.

That was Dora's idea of a joke. But if he could have foreseen—!

He met the others at the Greek restaurant, began with a couple of *araks,* which warmed him, then went on to red wine, bad olives, *pilaf,* and other obscure foods; and considerably later they all walked

along Boylston Street to Smith's room. It was a cold night, the temperature below twenty, with a fine dry snow sifting the streets. But Smith's room was comfortably warm, he trotted out some gin and the Porto Rican cigars, showed them a new snap shot of Squiggles (his Revere Beach sweetheart), and then they settled down to a nice long cozy game of bridge.

It was during an intermission, when they all got up to stretch their legs and renew their drinks, that the talk started—Michael never could remember which one of them it was who had put in the first oar—about impulse. It might have been Hurwitz, who was in many ways the only intellectual one of the three, though hardly what you might call a high-brow. He had his queer curiosities, however, and the idea was just such as might occur to him. At any rate, it was he who developed the idea, and with gusto.

"Sure," he said, "anybody might do it. Have you got impulses? Of course, you got impulses. How many times you think—suppose I do that? And you don't do it, because you know damn well if you do it you'll get arrested. You meet a man you despise—you want to spit in his eye. You see a girl you'd like to make friends with—maybe you want to squeeze her arm when she stands beside you in the street car. You know what I mean."

"Do I know what you mean!" sighed Smith. "I'll tell the world. I'll tell the cock-eyed world!.."

"You would," said Bryant. "And so would I."

"It would be easy," said Hurwitz, "to give in to it. You know what I mean? So simple. Temptation is too close. That girl you see is too damn good-looking—she stands too near you—you just put out your hand, it touches her arm—maybe her leg—why worry? And you think, maybe if she don't like it I can make believe I didn't mean it....."

"Like these fellows that slash fur coats with razor blades," said Michael. "Just impulse, in the beginning, and only later a habit."

"Sure..... And like these fellows that cut off braids of hair with scissors. They just feel like it and do it..... Or stealing."

"Stealing?" said Bryant.

"Sure. Why, I often feel like it.....I see a nice little thing right in front of me on a counter—you know, a nice little knife, or necktie, or a box of candy—quick, you put it in your pocket, and then go to the other counter, or the soda fountain for a drink. What would be more human? We all want things. Why not take them? Why not do them? And civilization is only skin-deep....."

"That's right. Skin-deep," said Bryant.

"But if you were caught, by God!" said Smith, opening his eyes wide.

"Who's talking about getting caught? ..... Who's talking about doing it? It isn't that we do it, it's only that we want to do it. Why, Christ, there's

been times when I thought to hell with everything."

Michael was astonished at this turn of the talk. He had often felt both these impulses. To know that this was a kind of universal human inclination came over him with something like relief.

"Of course, everybody has those feelings," he said smiling. "I have them myself.....But suppose you did yield to them?"

"Well, we don't," said Hurwitz.

"I know—but suppose you did?"

Hurwitz shrugged his fat shoulders, indifferently.

"Oh, well," he said, "it would be bad business."

"Jesus, yes," said Smith, shuffling the cards.

"Oy," said Bryant.

The game was resumed, the glasses were refilled, pipes were lit, watches were looked at. Michael had to think of the last car from Sullivan Square, at eleven-fifty. But also he could not stop thinking of this strange idea. It was amusing. It was fascinating. Here was everyone wanting to steal—toothbrushes, or books—or to caress some fascinating stranger of a female in a subway train—the impulse everywhere—why not be a Columbus of the moral world and really do it?..... He remembered stealing a conch-shell from the drawing room of a neighbour when he was ten—it had been one of the thrills of his life. He had popped it into his sailor blouse and borne it away with perfect aplomb. When, later, suspicion had been cast upon him, he had smashed

the shell in his back yard. And often, when he had been looking at Parker's collection of stamps—the early Americans—

The game interrupted his recollections, and presently it was time for the usual night-cap. Bryant drove them to Park Street. Michael was a trifle tight, but not enough to be unsteady on his feet. He waved a chery hand at Bryant and Hurwitz and began to trudge through the snow to the subway entrance. The lights on the snow were very beautiful. The Park Street Church was ringing, with its queer, soft quarter-bells, the half-hour. Plenty of time. Plenty of time. Time enough for a visit to the drugstore, and a hot chocolate—he could see the warm lights of the windows falling on the snowed sidewalk. He zig-zagged across the street and entered.

And at once he was seized with a conviction that his real reason for entering the drugstore was not to get a hot chocolate—not at all! He was going to steal something. He was going to put the impulse to the test, and see whether (one) he could manage it with sufficient skill, and (two) whether theft gave him any real satisfaction. The drugstore was crowded with people who had just come from the theatre next door. They pushed three deep round the soda fountain, and the cashier's cage. At the back of the store, in the toilet and prescription department, there

were not so many, but nevertheless enough to give him a fair chance. All the clerks were busy. His hands were in the side pockets of his overcoat—they were deep wide pockets and would serve admirably. A quick gesture over a table or counter, the object dropped in—

Oddly enough, he was not in the least excited: perhaps that was because of the gin. On the contrary, he was intensely amused; not to say delighted. He was smiling, as he walked slowly along the right-hand side of the store towards the back; edging his way amongst the people, with first one shoulder forward and then the other, while with a critical and appraising eye he examined the wares piled on the counters and on the stands in the middle of the floor. There were some extremely attractive scent-sprays or atomizers—but the dangling bulbs might be troublesome. There were stacks of boxed letter-paper. A basket full of clothes-brushes. Green hot-water bottles. Percolators—too large, and out of the question. A tray of multi-coloured toothbrushes, bottles of cologne, fountain pens—and then he experienced love at first sight. There could be no question that he had found his chosen victim. He gazed, fascinated, at the delicious object—a *de luxe* safety-razor set, of heavy gold, in a snakeskin box which was lined with red plush.....

It wouldn't do, however, to stare at it too long—one of the clerks might notice. He observed quickly

the exact position of the box—which was close to the edge of the glass counter—and prefigured with a quite precise mental picture the gesture with which he would simultaneously close it and remove it. Forefinger at the back—thumb in front—the box drawn forward and then slipped down toward the pocket—as he thought it out, the muscles in his forearm pleasurably contracted. He continued his slow progress round the store, past the prescription counter, past the candy counter; examined with some show of attention the display of cigarette lighters and blade sharpeners; and then a quick turn, went leisurely back to his victim. Everything was propitious. The whole section of counter was clear for the moment—there were neither customers nor clerks. He approached the counter, leaned over it as if to examine some little filigreed "compacts" at the back of the showcase, picking up one of them with his left hand, as he did so. He was thus leaning directly over the box; and it was the simplest thing in the world to clasp it as planned between thumb and forefinger of his other hand, to shut it softly, and to slide it downward to his pocket. It was over in an instant. He continued then for a moment to turn the compact case this way and that in the light, as if to see it sparkle. It sparkled very nicely. Then he put it back on the little pile of cases, turned, and approached the soda fountain—just as Hurwitz had suggested,

He was in the act of pressing forward in the crowd to ask for his hot chocolate when he felt a firm hand close round his elbow. He turned, and looked at a man in a slouch hat and dirty raincoat, with the collar turned up. The man was smiling in a very offensive way.

"I guess you thought that was pretty slick," he said in a low voice which nevertheless managed to convey the very essence of venom and hostility. "You come along with me, mister!"

Michael returned the smile amiably, but was a little frightened. His heart began to beat.

"I don't know what you're talking about," he said, still smiling.

"No, of course not!"

The man was walking toward the rear of the store, and was pulling Michael along with him, keeping a paralyzingly tight grip on his elbow. Michael was beginning to be angry, but also to be horrified. He thought of wrenching his arm free, but feared it would make a scene. Better not. He permitted himself to be urged ignominiously along the shop, through a gate in the rear counter, and into a small room at the back, where a clerk was measuring a yellow liquid into a bottle.

"Will you be so kind as to explain to me what this is all about?" he then said, with what frigidity of manner he could muster. But his voice shook a little. The man in the slouch hat paid no attention.

He addressed the clerk instead, giving his head a quick backward jerk as he spoke.

"Get the manager in here," he said

He smiled at Michael, with narrowed eyes, and Michael, hating him, but panic-stricken, smiled foolishly back at him.

"Now, look here—" he said.

But the manager had appeared, and the clerk: and events then happened with revolting and nauseating speed. Michael's hand was yanked violently from his pocket, the fatal snakeskin box was pulled out by the detective, and identified by the manager and the clerk. They both looked at Michael with a queer expression, in which astonishment, shame, and contempt were mixed with vague curiosity.

"Sure that's ours," said the manager, looking slowly at Michael.

"I saw him pinch it," said the detective. "What about it?" He again smiled offensively at Michael. "Anything to say?"

"It was all a joke," said Michael, his face feeling very hot and flushed. "I made a kind of bet with some friends.....I can prove it. I can call them up for you."

The three men looked at him in silence, all three of them just faintly smiling, as if incredulously.

"Sure you can," said the detective, urbanely. "You can prove it in court.....Now come along with me, mister."

Michael was astounded at this appalling turn of events, but his brain still worked. Perhaps if he were to put it to this fellow as man to man, when they got outside? As he was thinking this, he was firmly conducted through a back door into a dark alley at the rear of the store. It had stopped snowing. A cold wind was blowing. But the world, which had looked so beautiful fifteen minutes before, had now lost its charm. They walked together down the alley in six inches of powdery snow, the detective holding Michael's arm with affectionate firmness.

"No use calling the wagon," he said. "We'll walk. It ain't far."

They walked along Tremont Street. And Michael couldn't help, even then, thinking what an extraordinary thing this was! Here were all these good people passing them, and little knowing that he, Michael Lowes, was a thief, a thief by accident, on his way to jail. It seemed so absurd as hardly to be worth speaking of! And suppose they shouldn't believe him? This notion made him shiver. But it wasn't possible—no, it wasn't possible. As soon as he had told his story, and called up Hurwitz and Bryant and Smith, it would all be laughed off. Yes, laughed off.

He began telling the detective about it: how they had discussed such impulses over a game of bridge. Just a friendly game, and they had joked about it and then, just to see what would happen, he had done

it. What was it that made his voice sound so insincere, so hollow? The detective neither slackened his pace nor turned his head. His business-like grimness was alarming. Michael felt that he was paying no attention at all; and, moreover, it occurred to him that this kind of lowbrow official might not even understand such a thing.....He decided to try the sentimental.

"And good Lord, man, there's my wife waiting for me—!"

"Oh, sure, and the kids too."

"Yes, and the kids!"

The dectective gave a quick leer over the collar of his dirty raincoat.

"And no Santy Claus *this* year," he said.

Michael saw that it was hopeless. He was wasting his time.

"I can see it's no use talking to you," he said stiffly. "You're so used to dealing with criminals that you think all mankind is criminal."

"Sure."

Arrived at the station, and presented without decorum to the lieutenant at the desk, Michael tried again. Something in the faces of the lieutenant and the sergeant, as he told his story, made it at once apparent that there was going to be trouble. They obviously didn't believe him—not for a moment. But after consultation, they agreed to call up Bryant and Hurwitz and Smith, and to make inquiries. The

sergeant went off to do this, while Michael sat on a wooden bench. Fifteen minutes passed, during which the clock ticked and the lieutenant wrote slowly in a book, using a blotter very frequently. A clerk had been dispatched, also, to look up Michael's record, if any. This gentleman came back first, and reported that there was nothing. The lieutenant scarcely looked up from his book and went on writing. The first serious blow then fell. The sergeant, reporting, said that he hadn't been able to get Smith (of course—Michael thought—he's off somewhere with Squiggles) but had got Hurwitz and Bryant. Both of them denied that there had been any bet. They both seemed nervous, as far as he could make out over the phone. They said they didn't know Lowes well, were acquaintances of his, and made it clear that they didn't want to be mixed up in anything. Hurwitz had added that he knew Lowes was hard up.

At this, Michael jumped to his feet, feeling as if the blood would burst out of his face.

"The damned liars!" he shouted. "The bloody liars! By God—!"

"Take him away," said the lieutenant, lifting his eyebrows, and making a motion with his pen.

Michael lay awake all night in his cell, after talking for five minutes with Dora on the telephone. Something in Dora's cool voice had frightened him more than anything else.

And when Dora came to talk to him the next morning at nine o'clock, his alarm proved to be well-founded. Dora was cold, detached, deliberate. She was not at all what he had hoped she might be—sympathetic and helpful. She didn't volunteer to get a lawyer, or in fact to do anything—and when she listened quietly to his story, it seemed to him that she had the appearance of a person listening to a very improbable lie. Again, as he narrated the perfectly simple episode—the discussion of "impulse" at the bridge game, the drinks, and the absured tipsy desire to try a harmless little experiment—again, as when he talked to the store detective, he heard his own voice becoming hollow and insincere. It was exactly as if he knew himself to be guilty. His throat grew dry, he began to falter, to lose his thread, to use the wrong words. When he stopped speaking finally, Dora was silent.

"Well, say something!" he said angrily, after a moment. "Don't just stare at me. "I'm not a criminal!"

"I'll get a lawyer for you," she answered, "but that's all I can do."

"Look here, Dora—you don't mean you—"

He looked at her incredulously. It wasn't possible that she really thought him a thief? And suddenly, as he looked at her, he realized how long it was since he had really known this woman. They had drifted apart. She was embittered, that was it—

embittered by his non-success. All this time she had slowly been laying up a reserve of resentment. She had resented his inability to make money for the children, the little dishonesties they had had to commit in the matter of unpaid bills, the humiliations of duns, the too-frequent removals from town to town—she had more than once said to him, it was true, that because of all this she had never had any friends—and she had resented, he knew, his gay little parties with Hurwitz and Bryant and Smith, implying a little that they were an extravagance which was to say the least inconsiderate. Perhaps they *had* been. But was a man to have no indulgences?.....

"Perhaps we had better not go into that," she said.

"Good Lord—you don't believe me!"

"I'll get the lawyer—though I don't know where the fees are to come from. Our bank account is down to seventy-seven dollars. The rent is due a week from today. You've got some salary coming, of course, but I don't want to touch my own savings, naturally, because the children and I may need them."

To be sure. Perfectly just. Women and children first. Michael thought these things bitterly, but refrained from saying them. He gazed at this queer cold little female with intense curiosity. It was simply extraordinary—simply astonishing. Here she was, seven years his wife, he thought he knew her

inside and out, every quirk of her handwriting, inflection of voice; her passion for strawberries, her ridiculous way of singing; the brown moles on her shoulder, the extreme smallness of her feet and toes, her dislike of silk underwear. Her special voice at the telephone, too—that rather chilly abruptness, which had always surprised him, as if she might be a much harder woman than he thought her to be. And the queer sinuous cat-like rhythm with which she always combed her hair before the mirror at night, before going to bed—with her head tossing to one side, and one knee advanced to touch the chest of drawers. He knew all these things, which nobody else knew, and nevertheless, now, they amounted to nothing. The woman herself stood before him as opaque as a wall.

"Of course," he said, "you'd better keep your own savings." His voice was dull. "And you'll, of course, look up Hurwitz and the others? They'l. appear, I'm sure, and it will be the most important evidence. In fact, *the* evidence."

"I'll ring them up, Michael," was all she said, and with that she turned quickly on her heel and went away.....

Michael felt doom closing in upon him; his wits went round in circles; he was in a constant sweat. It wasn't possible that he was going to be betrayed? It wasn't possible! He assured himself of this. He walked back and forth, rubbing his hands together,

he kept pulling out his watch to see what time it was. Five minutes gone. Another five minutes gone. Damnation, if this lasted too long, this confounded business, he'd lose his job. If it got into the papers, he might lose it anyway. And suppose it was true that Hurwitz and Bryant had said what they said—may be they were afraid of losing their jobs too. Maybe that was it! Good God.....

This suspicion was confirmed, when, hours later, the lawyer came to see him. He reported that Hurwitz, Bryant and Smith had all three refused flatly to be mixed up in the business. They were all afraid of the effects of the publicity. If subpoenaed, they said, they would state that they had known Lowes only a short time, had thought him a little eccentric, and knew him to be hard up. Obviously—and the little lawyer picked his teeth with the point of his pencil—they could not be summoned. It would be fatal.

The Judge, not unnaturally perhaps, decided that there was a perfectly clear case. There couldn't be the shadow of a doubt that this man had deliberately stolen an article from the counter of So-and-so's drugstore. The prisoner had stubbornly maintained that it was the result of a kind of bet with some friends, but these friends had refused to give testimony in his behalf. Even his wife's testimony—that

he had never done such a thing before—had seemed rather half-hearted; and she had admitted, moreover, that Lowes was unsteady, and that they were always living in a state of something like poverty. Prisoner, further, had once or twice jumped his rent and had left behind him in Somerville unpaid debts of considerable size. He was a college man, a man of exceptional education and origin, and ought to have known better. His general character might be good enough, but as against all this, here was a perfectly clear case of theft, and a perfectly clear motive. The prisoner was sentenced to three months in the house of correction.

By this time, Michael was in a state of complete stupor. He sat in the box and stared blankly at Dora who sat very quietly in the second row, as if she were a stranger. She was looking back at him, with her white face turned a little to one side, as if she too had never seen him before, and were wondering what sort of people criminals might be. Human? Sub-human? She lowered her eyes after a moment, and before she had looked up again, Michael had been touched on the arm and led stumbling out of the courtroom. He thought she would of course come to say goodbye to him, but even in this he was mistaken; she left without a word.

And when he did finally hear from her, after a week, it was in a very brief note.

"Michael," it said, "I'm sorry, but I can't bring up

the children with a criminal for a father, so I'm taking proceedings for a divorce. This is the last straw. It was bad enough to have you always out of work and to have to slave night and day to keep bread in the children's mouths. But this is too much, to have disgrace into the bargain. As it is, we'll have to move right away, for the schoolchildren have sent Dolly and Mary home crying three times already. I'm sorry, and you know how fond I was of you at the beginning, but you've had your chance. You won't hear from me again. You've always been a good sport, and generous, and I hope you'll make this occasion no exception, and refrain from contesting the divorce. Goodbye—Dora."

Michael held the letter in his hands, unseeing, and tears came into his eyes. He dropped his face against the sheet of notepaper, and rubbed his forehead to and fro across it.....Little Dolly!.... .....Little Mary!.....Of course. This was what life was. It was just as meaningless and ridiculous as this; a monstrous joke; a huge injustice, You couldn't trust anybody, not even your wife, not even your best friends. You went on a little lark, and they sent you to prison for it, and your friends lied about you, and your wife left you.....

Contest it? Should he contest the divorce? What was the use? There was the plain fact: that he had been convicted for stealing. No one had believed his story of doing it in fun, after a few drinks; the divorce

court would be no exception. He dropped the letter to the floor and turned his heel on it, slowly and bitterly. Good riddance—good riddance! Let them all go to hell. He would show them. He would go west, when he came out—get rich, clears his name somehow.....But how?

He sat down on the edge of his bed and thought of Chicago. He thought of his childhood there, the Lake Shore Drive, Winnetka, the trip to Niagara Falls with his mother. He could hear the Falls now. He remembered the Fourth of July on the boat; the crowded examination room at college; the time he had broken his leg in baseball, when he was fourteen; and the stamp collection which he had lost at school. He remembered his mother always saying, "Michael, you must learn to be orderly'; and the little boy who had died of scarlet fever next door; and the pink conch-shell smashed in the back yard. His whole life seemed to be composed of such trivial and infinitely charming little episodes as these; and as he thought of them, affectionately and with wonder, he assured himself once more that he had really been a good man. And now, had it all come to an end? It had all come foolishly to an end.

THE JADE GODDESS

Chingpen Tungshu

It must have been over a hundred years ago. Meilan was then a young happy girl living in a large garden home in Kaifeng. As the only daughter of a high official, Commissioner Chang, she was very much pampered. Her father was a very severe judge but upon his daughter he bestowed all his affection.

One day a distant nephew arrived. His name was Chang Po and he was an intelligent lad of sixteen, vivacious and full of spirit. He was somewhat tall for his age and his hands, with beautiful tapering fingers, were remarkable for a country lad. He made such a good impression on the family that the mother decided he could be given the job of caring for visitors, though he did not know how to read or write.

He was a year older than Meilan and as they were still children they often met and talked and laughed together, for Chang Po could tell Meilan stories of the country and she loved to listen to him.

But after a few weeks the family's first enthusiasm for the boy was somewhat dampened. He was both unusual and difficult. In the first place he was not a good servant; he was often forgetful of his duties and would not, or could not, take a scolding from his elders if he made a mistake. And so the girl's mother asked him to tend the gardens. The boy was finally happy doing this work.

Chang Po was one of those original people born

to create, not to learn what the world had to teach him. He was perfectly happy along with his flowers and trees and he walked about and whistled as if he were lord of the creation. Left alone, he could do amazing things. He had taught himself to paint without a master. In his spare time he made wonderful lanterns and moulded the most lifelike clay animals.

At the age of eighteen Chang Po was seemingly good for nothing. What exactly attracted Meilan to him, she herself could not say. He was just different and had grown tall and handsome. He got away with everything and had made himself loved by the family with the exception of the father. A natural intimacy grew up between the cousins, although it was clearly understood that as they were of the same clan name, marriage between them was out of the question.

One day Chang Po suddenly announced to the mistress of the house that he was leaving to learn a trade. He had found a jade-worker's shop and had offered himself as an apprentice. The mother thought it just as well, since he was too often with Meilan. But Chang continued to live on at the house, returning every night, and he had even more to say to his cousin than before.

"Meilan," the mother said one day, "you are both grown up now and although Brother Po is your cousin, you ought not to see each other too often."

Her mother's words made Meilan think. She had never quite realised that she was in love with the

boy Chang.

That night she met Chang Po in the garden. Sitting on a stone bench in the moonlight, she casually mentioned what her mother had said.

"Brother Po," she said, blushing, "Mother says I mustn't see you so much."

"Yes, we are grown up now."

The girl hung her head. "What does that mean?" She spoke half to herself.

Chand Po stole a hand around her waist "It means that something in you makes you more charming every day to me, something which makes me crave to see you. Something which makes me feel happy when you are near and lonely and sad when I am away."

The girl sighed and asked, "Are you happy now?"

"Yes and everything changes. Meilan, we belong to each other," he said softly.

"You know very well I cannot marry you and that my parents will arrange match for me before long."

"No, you mustn't say that. You mustn't".

"You must understand."

"I understand only this;" Chang said, drawing the girl into his arms. "Since the heaven and earth were created, you were made for me and I was made for you and I will not let you go. It cannot be wrong to love you."

Meilan fled from his embrace and ran to her room.

The awakening of young love was a terrible thing. The more so when with it came the realisation of their position, of the sweet poignancy of the unattainable. That night Meilan lay in bed thinking of what her mother had said and then what Chang had said. From that night on she was completely changed. The more they tried to stop the love that had been awakened, the more they felt themselves in its power. They tried not to see each other. After three days, the girl in humiliation came back to him and their excitement was increased by secrecy. Those were the days of young passions and tender regrets. temporary separations and renewed pledges. so sweet and so bitter, and both knew they were in the power of something greater than themselves.

They had no plans. They just loved. According to the customs of the time, Meilan's parents were already suggesting one young man after another for her but she kept putting them off. Sometimes she said she did not want to marry at all, which greatly shocked her mother. As she was yet young, the parents did not insist and since she was their only daughter, they were half-willing to keep her with them longer.

Meanwhile Chang was working and learning his trade. In jade work, Chang Po had found his natural

element. Like a born artist, he had made himself in a short time a master of his trade. He loved it; he worked tirelessly until every detail was perfect. The master of the shop was amazed by him. The rich gentry began to frequent the jade shop with orders.

One day Meilan's father decided to give a present to the Empress on her birthday. He wanted to find something special and located an extraordinary large piece of jade of very fine quality. At the mother's suggestion, the commissioner went to the shope where Chang Po worked and explained what he wanted. Examining Chang Po's sculpture, he was quite struck by its individuality.

"Son, here is a very special job for you. This is for the Empress, and if you do this job well, your fortune is made."

Chang Po examined the jade. His hands travelled slowly over the uncarved stone. He was delighted. It was agreed that he should make it into a Kuan Yin, a goddess of mercy, and Chang Po knew that he would make one of such beauty as no man had set eyes upon before.

Chang Po permitted no one to see the statue until it was completed.

When it was finished, the goddes was in the conventional design and posture but it was a perfect work of art, exquisite in its tender beauty. Chang

Po had done what no other craftsman had been able to do before: he had carved a pair of freely revolving ear-rings on the goddess' ears; and the ear-lobes themselves were so thin and well modulated that they compelled admiration. The goddess' face was like that of the girl he loved.

Naturally the commissioner was greatly pleased. This piece would be unique even in the palace.

"The face is remarkably like Meilan's" the father remarked.

"Yes," replied Chang Po proudly. "She is the inspiration."

"Good. Young man, from now on your success is assured." He paid Chang generously and added, "You ought to be grateful to me for giving you this opportunity."

Chang Po's name was made. Yet what he wanted most he could not have. The success meant nothing to him without Meilan. He realised that the greatest desire of his heart was beyond him. The young man lost interest in his work. He would not accept lucrative offers. To the chagrin of his master, he just could not work.

Meilan was now approaching the scandalous age of twenty-one and not yet engaged. A match was being arranged with a very influential family. The girl could postpone no longer and her engagement was solemnised by an exchange of gifts.

Reckless with despair, the girl and the boy planned to elope. Assured of Chang's ability to earn a living, Meilan would take away some of her jewels and they could support themselves in some distant province.

The couple prepared to escape one evening through the back of the garden. As it happened, an old servant saw them at the dark hour of the night and his suspicion was aroused, for the affair was known inside the household. Thinking it his duty to protect the family from a scandal, the servant held the girl and would not let her go. Chang had no choice. He pushed the servant aside. The old man tottered but would not let go and Chang gave him a blow which felled the poor man at the edge of the rockery. His head struck a jagged rock and he lay limp on the ground. Seeing the servant lifeless, they fled.

The next morning the family discovered the elopement and the dead servant. While they tried to hush the scandal, efforts to trace the couple proved completely fruitless. The commissioner was thrown into a fit of helpless rage. "I shall cover the earth," he vowed "and bring him back to justice."

After escaping from the capital, the young couple travelled on and on. Finally, avoiding the big towns, they crossed Yangtze and came down to south China.

"I hear that there is a good jade in Kiangse," Chang said to Meilan.

"Do you think you should work at jade again?" she asked hesitantly. "Your work will be recognised and betray you."

"I thought that was what we planned to do all along," Chang replied.

"That was before old Tai died. They think we murdered him. Can't you change your trade—make lanterns or clay dolls as you used to do?"

"Why? I have made a name for myself with jade."

"You have. That is the whole trouble," Meilan said.

"I don't think we have to worry. Kiangse is almost a thousand miles from the capital. Nobody will know us."

"Then you must change your style. Don't do those extraordinary things. Just do well enough to bring in customers."

Chang Po bit his lips and said nothing. Should be content himself with what a thousand mediocre jade workers were doing to remain safely unknown? Should he destroy his art or allow his art to destroy him? He had not thought of that.

But his wife's instinct was right. She feared it would be against her husband's nature to do cheap, commercial work. She sensed also, after they had crossed the Yangtze, that a mysterious force was dragging her husband towards the jade route in Kiangse, which led from the great mountain pass at

Canton into the rich south-east plains. They did not dare stop at Nanchang, the provincial capital, and went on to Kian. The wife again brought up the question of change of profession. Kiangse produced the finest white kaolin and the finest porcelain. Porcelain would satisfy his artistic gift equally well. But Chang Po would not listen.

"Even if I did," said Chang Po, "I would make such porcelain figures that I would be recognised. Or do you want me to do cheap mediocre work? I am sure it is safe here to work in jade."

Against her woman's instinct, the wife yielded. "Then please, beloved, for my sake, do not make a name for yourself. We are in trouble, and if you do, we shall be ruined."

She said this because it was her belief, but she knew it was unlikely that her husband would be satisfied with anything but the finest work his hands could produce. With his fine sense of beauty, his love of perfection, his pride in his work, and his passion for jade, what Chang Po really had to escape from was not the police, but himself. He sensed the tragic irony of his situation.

With his wife's jewels, Chang Po was able to buy a stock of uncarved stones of various qualities and set up a shop. Meilan watched him at work.

"Good enough, darling," she would say. "Nobody does any better. For my sake, please."

Chang Po looked at her and smiled ruefully. He

began to make a number of common round ear-rings and pendants. But jade is a stone that demands its own expression and its own treatment; it would be wrong to cut up a stone for pendants which could be made into a lovely creation—perhaps a monkey stealing peaches. And so occasionally Chang made—at first stealthily with a bad conscience—some ingenious and lovely things, strikingly original. These things, the work of his love, were snatched up as fast as he could make them and brought him far greater profits than the cheaper commercial goods.

"Darling, I am worried," Meilan pleaded with him. "You are getting too well known. I am expecting a baby. Please be careful."

"A child!" he exclaimed. "Now we are a family!" and Chang Po kissed away what he called her womanish fancies.

"But we are doing too well," Meilan murmured.

They were doing well indeed. After a year, the reputation of Paoho jade was established, for that was the name Chang Po had given his shop. All gentry came to buy his ware and the town of Kian itself became known as the city where people on their way to the provincial capital would stop and pick up some delightful jade objects.

One day a man walked into the shop and after looking round casually at the display of goods, asked, "Are you not Chang Po, relative of Commissioner Chang of Kaifeng?"

Chang Po quickly denied it, saying that he had never been to Kaifeng.

The man eyed him suspiciously. "You speak the northern accent well enough. Are you married?"

"That is none of your business."

Meilan peeped from behind the shop. When the man was gone, she told Chang that the stranger was a secretary from her father's office. Perhaps his jade work had really betrayed them.

The next day the man came in again.

"I tell you I don't know what you are talking about," Chang Po said.

"Very well, I will tell you about Chang Po. He is wanted for murder, the abduction of the commissioner's daughter and the theft of his jewels. If you want to convince me that you are not Chang Po, will you ask your wife to serve me a cup of tea? I shall be satisfied when I see that she is not the commissioner's daughter."

"I am running a shop here. If you are trying to create trouble, I must ask you to leave."

The man left the shop with a quizzical smile.

Hastily they packed their jadeware and precious belongings, hired a boat and left after dark, fleeing up-river. Their baby was only three months old.

Perhaps it was human perversity or perhaps it was in the divine plan of things. At Kanshein they had to stop, for the baby fell ill and they had run out

of money after a month on the voyage. Chang Po had to take out one of his finest creations, a crouching dog with one eye closed, and sell it to a jade merchant named Wang.

"Why, this is Paoho jade," said the merchant. "No other shop makes such things. Absolutely inimitable."

"You are right. I bought it from Paoho," Chang Po said. He was secretly delighted."

Kanshein lay at the foot of a high mountain range. It was winter and Chang Po fell in love with the clear blue sky and mountain air. He and his wife made plans to stay. Their baby was better and Chang decided to open a new shop. Kanshein was a big city, and they thought it prudent to move farther out and settle in a town some twenty miles away. Chang Po had to sell another of his pieces.

"Why did you do it?" asked Meilan.

"Because we need the money to set up the shop."

"Listen to me this time," Meilan said. "We open a clay shop here."

"Why——" Chang Po stopped short.

"We were nearly caught because you would not listen. Does jade mean so much to you? More than your wife and baby? Later things may change and you can go back to your art again."

Against his wish Chang Po set up a shop making baked black clay figurines. He made hundreds of Buddhas, but every week he saw the jade merchants

from Canton pass this route and Chang yearned to handle the stone again. He would wander along the streets, stopping at some jadeware shop and anger would roll from his eyes. He came home and, seeing the wet clay figures on which he had been working, he crushed them between his fingers.

"Mud; Why should I work with this when I can chisel jade?"

Meilan was frightened by the fire in his eyes. "It will be your ruin."

One day the jade merchant Wang met Chang Po and invited him into his inn, in the hope of getting some more Paoho jade.

"Where have you been?" Chang Po asked.

"I just came back from a trip to Kian," Wang replied. He unwrapped a parcel and said, "You see this is the kind of stuff that Paoho shop is turning out now."

Chang Po was silent. When Wang produced carnelian monkey. Chang shouted, "Imitation!"

"You are quite right," the merchant said softly. "There is no expression on the monkey's face. You talk like one who knows."

"I should know," Chang said curtly.

"Yes. I remember you sold me that marvellous crouching dog. I don't mind telling you that I made a hundred per cent profit on it. Have you any more pieces of that quality?"

"I will show you what a real Paoho carnelian monkey is like."

At his shop, Chang Po showed him one that he had made in Kian and the merchant was able to persuade Chang to sell it. On his next trip to Nanchang, Wang told some of his friends at the jade fair about the remarkable things he had been able to get from the owner of an ordinary clay shop in the south and added, "It seems strange that such a man should possess such lovely jade."

Some six months later, three soldiers came with orders to arrest Chang Po and the Commissioner's daughter and bring them to the capital. The secretary from the commissioner's office was with them.

"I will come with you if will let me pack up a few things," Chang said.

"And there are things to bring for the baby," Meilan added.

"Don't forget he is the commissioner's grandson. If he becomes ill on the way, you will be responsible."

The men had instructions from the commissioner himself to treat them well on the journey. Chang Po and his wife were allowed to go to the back of the shop while the soldiers waited in front.

It was a hard moment of parting. Chang Po kissed his wife and baby and jumped down from the window, knowing that he would never see them again in this life.

"I'll love you always," Meilan whispered softly from the window. "Never touch jade again."

Chang Po took a last look at Meilan as she stood before the window, one arm raised high to bid him good-bye for ever.

When he had disappeared, she withdrew and calmly entered the front of the shop to put down some of her things in a bag as if she were very busy packing. She told the soldiers to hold her baby and chatted with them as she went about packing. When the soldiers grew suspicious and searched the house, Chang Po was already gone.

Meilan returned to her home to find her mother dead, her father an old man. When she greeted him, there was no smile of forgiveness on his face. Only a look at her baby son softened him a little. In a way the old man was relieved that Chang Po had escaped, for he would not have known what to do with him. Still, he could never forgive the man who had ruined his daughter's life and brought such misery to the whole family.

Years passed and no news had come of Chang Po. Governor Yang from Canton arrived one day at the Capital. The commissioner gave a dinner in his honour and in the course of the dinner the governor revealed that he had brought a most precious statue which rivalled the Goddess of Mercy the commissioner had given to the Empress and bore a remarkable resemblance to it in style and fitness of work-

manship—in fact, it was far more beautiful. He was going to give it to the Empress, for the statues would make a pair.

The dinner guests were sceptical and expressed the opinion that a better piece of workmanship than the Empress' goddess was impossible.

"Wait till I show it to you," the governor said triumphantly.

When the dinner was over and the table cleared, the governor had a shining wood case brought in. As the white Jade Goddess of Mercy was removed from its case and placed on the middle of the table, a hush fell upon them all. Here was the tragic Goddess of Mercy.

A maidservant hurried to inform Meilan. From behind a latticed partition, Meilan looked into the room and paled when she saw the jade figure on the table. "He has done it! I know it is he!" she whispered. She pulled herself together to hear whether Chang Po was still alive.

"Who is the artist?" asked a guest.

"That is the most remarkable part of the story," the Canton Governor replied. "He is not a regular jade worker. I came to know about him through my wife's niece. She was going to a wedding and had borrowed my wife's antique bracelets to wear for the occasion. They were identical, an intricate design of two intertwining dragons. My niece broke one of them and was horrified. It was really a pity, for the

bracelets were unique and very difficult to replace. My niece insisted that she would have the one bracelet duplicated. She went to many shops but none would take the job, saying frankly that it could not be done these days. She advertised in tea-houses. Soon after, a shabbily dressed man appeared and said he had come to answer the advertisement. The bracelet was shown to him. He said he could do it and he did. That was how I first heard about this man.

"When I learned that the Empress would like another figure to match the Goddess of Mercy, I thought of this man. I ordered the finest piece of jade obtainable at Canton and sent for him. When he was brought in, he looked thoroughly frightened as if he had been caught as a thief. It took me a long time to explain to him that I wanted him to make a Goddess of Mercy to match one in the Empress' possession. When I described to him the revolving earrings he winced but he said nothing. Gradually he approached the stone and examined it from every angle. 'What is the matter?' I asked. 'Is it not good enough?' Finally he turned and said proudly, 'This piece will do. It is worth trying. All my life I have been hoping to get white jade of this quality. I will do it, Governor, provided you do not pay me for it—and leave me in complete freedom to execute what I have in mind.'

"I put him in a room with a simple bed and table

and installed all the equipment he asked for. He was rather a queer fellow. He talked to no one and was a bit rude to the servant who took things in for him. But he worked like one inspired. I was not allowed to see the statue for five months. Another three months passed before he came with finished work. I was staggered when I saw it, as you see it before you. As he looked at his own creation, there was a strange expression on his face.

" 'There, Governor', he said, 'I want to thank you. That statue is my life story."

"He left before I could answer. I went after him but he was gone. He had completely disappeared."

The guests heard a scream from the next room, a woman's scream so striking and heart-rending that everybody was frozen in his place. Alone, the old commissioner rushed to Meilan, lying on the floor.

A guest who was a close friend of the family whispered to the bewildered governor, "That is the daughter of the commissioner. She is the goddess. I am sure your artist is no other than her husband, Chang Po."

When Meilan was revived, she approached the table before all of them. Slowly her hands raised to touch the statuette and then rested tightly on it, as if in seeing and feeling the statue she was in touch with her husband once more. And they all saw that the jade statue and the girl were the same woman.

"Keep the statue, my dear," the governor told

her, when he had learned what had happened. "I can find some other present for the Empress. I hope it will be some consolation to you. It is yours until you are reunited with your husband."

From that day on Meilán grew weaker, as if some mysterious disease was eating away her body. The commissioner was ready to forgive everything if his son-in-law could be found. By the following spring, word came back from the Canton governor that all efforts to locate Chang Po proved fruitless.

Two years later Chang Po's son died of an epidemic which swept through the city. Meilan then cut off her hair and entered a convent, taking along with her the jade goddess as her only possession. According to the prioress, she seemed to live in a world by herself. She would not permit another nun, not even the prioress, to enter her room.

The prioress said that Meilan had been seen at night writing prayer after prayer and burning it before the statue. She let no one into that secret world of hers but she was happy and hurt no body.

Some twenty years after she joined the convent, Meilan died. And so the perishable Goddess of Mercy passed away and the Jade Goddess remained.

KORNEY VASILIEV

Leo N. Tolstoy

Korney Vasiliev was fifty-four years old when he had last been in the country.

Twenty years ago he had finished his military service and returned home with money. At first he opened a shop, then he abandoned the shop and took to dealing in cattle. He would go to Chekas for "goods" (cattle), and drive them to Moscow.

In the village of Gayi, in his stone house covered with an iron roof, lived his old mother, his wife and two children (a girl and a boy), as well as an orphan nephew, a dumb boy of fifteen and a labourer.

At the railway station—the railway did not go by Gayi—he met a fellow countryman, Kusma the lame. Kusma came out from Gayi to meet every train in the hope of picking up a fare for his sorry pair of shaggy hacks. Kusma was a poor man, and in consequence disliked rich men, and Korney in particular; he called him Kornushka.

"No fare, Uncle Kusma?" asked he. "Won't you take me, eh?"

"If you like—for a rouble."

"Seventy kopeks is enough, eh?"

"A man with a full stomach ready to deprive a poor man of his thirty kopeks."

"Very well, come along then," said Korney, and putting his bag and bundle into the sleigh, he spread

himself out on the back seat.

Kusma remained on the box.

"Well, you can start now."

They left the holes and ruts near the station and drove out on to the smooth road.

"Well, how is it with you—not with us, but with you—in the country?" asked Korney.

"There is little good, to be sure."

"How is that? Is my old woman alive?"

"Oh, yes, she is alive; I saw her in church the day. Your old woman is alive. And so is your young wife. She has nothing to worry about. She has taken a new labourer."

And Kusma laughed, in a curious way, it seemed to Korney.

"A labourer? And what has happened to Peter?"

"Peter is ill. She has taken Evstigny Bely from Kamenka," said Kusma, "from her own village, that is."

"Indeed !" said Korney.

When Korney became engaged to Marfa, there had been some gossip among the women about Evstigny.

"That's how it is, Korney Vasilievitch," said Kusma; "the women have too much freedom now-a-days."

"So they say," said Korney. "Your grey is getting old," he added, anxious to change the subject.

"I am not young myself. The horse is like the master," said Kusma in reply to Korney's words, with a lash of the whip at the shaggy bow-legged gelding.

Korney reached home at dusk. The first person he met was Evstigny Bely himself, of whom he could not help thinking the whole way.

"So you live with us, it seems?" Korney began.

"One must work somewhere," Evstigny replied.

"Is the room heated?"

"Of course it is, Matvaeva is there," replied Evstigny.

Korney walked up the steps. Marfa, hearing his voice, came out into the passage, and catching sight of her husband flushed red and hastened to greet him with unusual affection.

"Mother and I gave up expecting you," said she, following Korney into the room.

"Well, how have you been getting on without me?"

"We live just as we used to do," said she, and seizing her two-year-old daughter in her arms, who was tugging at her skirt and begging for milk, with long resolute strides she walked out into the passage.

Korney's mother, black-eyed like himself shuffled into the room in low felt boots.

"Thank you for having come to see me," said she, shaking her quivering head.

Korney told his mother on what business he had

come home, and remembering Kusma, he went out to pay him. As soon as he opened the door into the passage, confronting him, in the yard door, stood Marfa and Evstigny. They were talking very near to each other. Catching sight of Korney, Evstigny slipped across the yard and Marfa went up to refix the chimney on the singing samovar.

Korney passed her silently, and taking up his bundle invited Kusma to tea in the large room. Before tea Korney distributed the presents he had bought from Moscow for his family—a woollen shawl for his mother, a picture book for Fedka, a waistcoat for his dumb nephew and print for a dress for his wife.

At tea Korney sat frowning and silent; only now and again he smiled involuntarily when he looked at the dumb boy, who amused everyone with his joy over the waistcoat. He folded and unfolded it, put it on, kissed Korney's hand and looked at him with laughing eyes.

Tea and supper over, Korney went into the room where he slept with Marfa and the little girl. Marfa remained in the large room to clear away the dishes. Korney sat alone, his elbows resting on the table, waiting. His anger against his wife grew and grew. He took down some bills from the wall, a note-book from his pocket, and to distract his thoughts, began to add up accounts, glancing at the door now and again and listening to the voices in the large room.

Several times he heard the door of the room open and some one come out into the passage, but it was not his wife. At last he heard her foot-steps; there was a pull at the door and it opened and she came in, rosy, handsome, in a red kerchief, carrying her little girl in her arms.

"You must be tired with the journey," said she smiling, as though not observing his sulky mood.

Korney looked at her but made no reply, and went on with his counting, though there was nothing further to count.

"It is getting late," said she, and putting down the little girl she went behind the partition.

He heard her making the bed and putting the child to sleep.

He rose slowly, put his scrap of pencil into his waistcoat pocket, hung the bills on a nail, and went up to the partition door. His wife stood with her face to the ikon; praying. He stopped and waited. For a long time she bowed and crossed herself and murmured her prayers. It seemed to him that she had long finished them all, and was repeating them over again on purpose. At last she prostrated herself to the ground, rose, and muttering a few words of prayer quickly, she returned to him.

"Agasha is sleeping," said she, pointing to the little girl, and, without a smile, she sat down on the creaking bed.

"Has Evstigny been here long?" asked Korney, coming through the door. With a calm movement she threw one of her thick plaits across her shoulders on to her breast, and with quick fingers began unplaiting it. She looked him straight in the face, her eyes laughing.

"Evstigny? I can't remember—about two or three weeks, I suppose."

"Do you live with him?" asked Korney.

She dropped the plait, then caught it up again, and began replaiting the coarse thick hair.

"Live with Evstigny! What an idea, indeed!" said she, pronouncing the word "Evstigny" in a peculiar ringing voice. "What lies people tell! Who said so?"

"I ask you, is it true or not?" demanded Korney, clenching his strong hands, thrust into his pockets.

"Don't talk nonsense! shall I take off your boots?"

"I ask you," repeated Korney.

"What a compliment for Evstigny, to be sure!" said she. "Who told you such a lie?"

"What did you say to him in the passage?"

"What did I say? I told him to put a new hoop on the barrel. Why will you worry me?"

"Tell me the truth, or I'll kill you, you dirty hussy!"

He seized her by her plait. She pulled it away from him, her face contorted by pain.

"You only want a fight! What kindness have I

known from you? What am I to do with such a life?"

"What are you to do?" he repeated, moving towards her.

"Why do you pull out my hair? Why do you call me names? Why do you worry me? It is true that.....

She had no time to finish. He seized her by the arm, pulled her off the bed and began raining blows on her head, her sides, her breast. The more he beat her, the stronger his anger grew. She screamed, defended herself, tried to escape from him, but he would not let her. The little girl awoke and rushed to her mother.

"Mamka!" cried she.

Korney seized the child's arm, tore her away from the mother, and threw her into a corner like a kitten. The child screamed for a moment or two, and then no further sound came from her.

"Murder! You have killed the child!" Marfa cried and tried to raise herself to go to her daughter, but again he seized her and gave her such a violent blow on the breast that she fell backwards and also ceased her cries.

The child resumed her cries and screamed and screamed without stopping to take breath.

The old woman, without a shawl, with dishevelled grey hair and quivering head, came in, swaying as she walked; taking no notice of Korney or Marfa, she

went up to her grandchild, whose hot tears were streaming down her cheeks and picked her up.

Korney stood breathing heavily and looking around as though he had just awakened from sleep, not comprehending where he was nor what had happened to him.

Marfa raised her head, groaning, and wiped the blood from her face with her sleeve.

"You horrible villain!" said she, "I do live with Evstigny and always did! Kill me if you like! Agashka is his daughter, and not yours," she blurted out quickly, covering her face with her arm to shield it from a further blow.

But Korney seemed not to understand anything and looked about him vacantly.

"See what you've done to the child! You've broken her arm!" said the old woman, pointing to the child's dislocated arm hanging limply by her side. Korney turned and walked silently into the passage and out at the door.

From that day nothing was heard of Korney and no one knew if he were living or dead.

II

Seventeen years passed. It was late in the autumn, when an old man, with a grey beard and grey curly hair, walked, moving with difficulty, leaning on his wooden staff at each step. Behind him, came a young woman, driving her flock home. When

she came abreast of the old man, she stopped and looked him up and down.

"Good evening, grandfather," she said in a soft ringing young voice.

"Good evening, bright child," replied the old man.

"Do you want a bed for the night, eh?"

"It seems so, I'm tired out," the old man replied hoarsely.

"Don't you go to the elder's man, grandfather?" the young woman said kindly. "Go straight to our place, the third hut from the end. My mother-in-law takes in wanderers like you."

"The third hut? That must be the Zinovyevs'" said the old man, puckering his black brows.

"How do you know?"

"I have been there."

The old man was Korney, the young woman Agasha, whose arm he had broken seventeen years ago. She had married into a rich family in Andreyevka, four versts from Gayi.

From the strong, rich, proud man he was, Korney Vasiliev became what he is now—an old mendicant who possessed nothing but the ragged clothes on his body, a soldier's ticket and two shirts in his bundle. The change took place so gradually that he could not have said when it began and how it had come about. The only thing he knew, the only thing he was sure

of, was that his misfortune had been brought about by his wicked wife. It was both strange and painful to him to recall what he had been formerly. Whenever he thought of it, he remembered the person whom he considered to be the cause of all the evil he had suffered for the past seventeen years.

The worse things grew, the more he blamed his wife, and the stronger became his wrath.

At last, becoming helpless, he decided to go home to his son. "Perhaps the wicked creature is dead by now," thought he. "And if she isn't then I will tell her before she dies, damn her! What she has done to me." With this thought he set off for home.

It took him two weeks to walk the two hundred versts, and ailing and weak he had reached the place, four miles from home, where he had met Agashka, without recognising her or being recognised—Agashka, who was considered but was not his daughter, and whose arm he had broken seventeen years ago.

III

He did as Agasha had told him. Going into the Zinovyev yards, he asked if he could stay the night there, and they took him in.

Entering the hut, he crossed himself in his usual manner before the ikon, and then greeted the hosts.

"Frozen, grandfather? Here, come to the stove!" said the jolly wrinkled old mistress, clearing the table.

Agafia's husband, a youngish peasant, was sitting

on a bench by the table, trimming the lamp.

"How wet you are!" said he; "dear, dear, come and dry yourself.

Korney undressed, took off his boots, and hanging his leg wrappings against the stove, he climbed on to it.

Agafia came into the hut, carrying a pitcher. She had already driven in the cattle and come back from the sheds.

"Did an old man come here?" asked she. "I told him to look in."

"There he is," said the host, pointing to the stove where Korney sat rubbing his rough, bony hands.

At tea the hosts called to Korney to come and join them. He climbed down from the stove and seated himself on the edge of the bench. He was given a cup of tea and a piece of sugar.

They talked of the weather, crops, saying that the landowners' corn could not be gathered in because of the rain; the peasants had taken in all theirs, but the corn of the gentry was rotting in the fields, and the mice, too, were terrible.

Korney related how he had seen a field full of corn sheaves on his way.

The young woman poured him out a fifth cup of weak tea and handed it to him.

"Never mind, grandfather, drink; it is good for you," said she when he refused it.

"What is wrong with your arm?" he asked, taking the cup from her carefully and puckering his brows.

"It was broken when she was quite little; her father wanted to kill our Agasha," said the talkative old mother-in-law.

"But why?" asked Korney. And looking at the young woman's face he suddenly recalled Evstigny Bely with his blue eyes, and the hand holding the cup shook so violently that he upset half his tea before he could put it down on the table.

"There was a man in Gayi, her father he was—Korney Vasiliev he was called. A rich man he was and proud of his wife. He beat her one day and crippled the child."

Korney was silent, looking up from beneath his quivering black brows, now at his hosts, now at Agasha.

"Why did he do it?" he asked, biting off a piece of sugar.

"Who knows? There is always gossip about us women," said the old mistress. "It was because of a labourer they had—a fellow from our village. He died in their house."

"Died?" asked Korney, coughing.

"A long time ago. Our young woman comes from their family. They lived well, the good people. The first in the village they were when the master was

alive."

"Is he dead, too, then?" asked Korney.

"We suppose so. He disappeared about fifteen years ago."

"It was longer than that. Mamushka told me that she had only just left off nursing me."

"Are you angry with him for having broken...." began Korney, but his voice broke.

"He is no stranger, you see, after all he is my father. Have some more tea; it will make you warm. Shall I pour you out some?"

Korney did not reply, but sobbed aloud.

"What is the matter?"

"Nothing, Christ save us!"

And Korney, with trembling hands, supporting himelf by pillar and wall, climbed on to the stove with his long emaciated legs.

"There now!" said the old woman to her son with a wink in the direction of the old man.

IV

.. The next day Korney rose earlier than the rest. He climbed down from the stove, straightened out the creases in the dried crumpled leg-wrappings, put on his boots, shrivelled with the heat, and slung his bag over his back.

"Why not stay to breakfast, grandfather?" said the old woman.

"God save you! I must go."

"Then take some of yesterday's *lepeshka* with you. I will put some into your bag."

Korney thanked her and took his leave.

"Come in on your way back; we shall still be alive, I suppose."

As he approached his one-time home, the gates creaked and out came a mare and foal, an old gelding roan and a three-year-old. The old roan resembled the mare Korney had brought home from the fair a year before his departure.

"It must be the one she was carrying at the time," thought he. "It has the same hanging hind-quarters, the same broad breast and shaggy legs."

The horses were being driven to water by a dark-eyed boy in new bast shoes. "My grandson, no doubt, Fedka's boy. He is dark-eyed like him," thought Korney.

The boy looked at the strange old man, then ran after a young stallion frisking about in the mud. Following the boy came a dog just as black as the former Volchok.

"Can it be Volchok?" thought Korney, and recalled that Volchok would now have been twenty years old.

With difficulty he mounted the steps of the verandah.

"Why do you poke your nose in here without asking?" a woman's voice called to him from the hut. He recognised his wife's voice. And there she was herself, a withered, stringy, wrinkled old woman,

coming out at the door. Korney had expected to see the young and handsome Marfa who had wronged him, whom he hated and wanted to upbraid, but instead here was some strange old woman. "If you've come begging, you can eat at the window," she said in a harsh, grating voice.

"I have not come to beg," said Korney.

"What do you want, then?"

She stopped suddenly, and by her face he could see that she had recognised him.

"There are many of the likes of you who come prowling about the house. Go away, go away in God's name!"

Korney swayed against the wall, and supporting himself on his staff, he gazed at her intently, feeling in wonder that the anger he had nursed against her for so many years had suddenly vanished. His emotion made him feel faint.

"Marfa, we shall soon be dead."

"Go, go in God's name!" she said quickly and viciously.

"Have you nothing more to say?"

"There is nothing for me to say," said she. "Go in God's name, go, go! There are many tramps like you prowling about the place!"

With quick steps she re-entered the hut and banged the door behind her.

"Why do you abuse him?" a man's voice was

heard, and a dark peasant appeared at the door with an axe at his girdle. He was the same as Korney had been forty years ago, only shorter and thinner. but he had the same black sparkling eyes.

It was no other than Fedka, whom seventeen years ago he had presented with a picture book. He was remonstrating with his mother for her unkindness to the beggar. Following him, also with an axe at his girdle, came the dumb nephew. He was now a grown peasant with a thin beard, wrinkled and wiry, with a long neck and a resolute, penetrating gaze. The two had only just finished their breakfast and were going out into the wood.

"In a moment, grandfather," said Fedor, and pointing to the old man and then to the room, he made a gesture to the dumb man as of cutting bread.

Fedor walked out into the street; the dumb nephew re-entered the hut. Korney stood with bent head, leaning against the wall and supporting himself on his staff. A great weakness had come over him; he restrained his sobs with difficulty. The dumb man came out of the hut with a large hunk of new fragrant black bread and handed it to Korney. When Korney, crossing himself, took the bread, the dumb man turned to the door of the hut, passed both his hands over his face, and made a motion as though of spitting; in this way he expressed his disapproval of his aunt. Suddenly he was petrified and stared open-mouthed at Korney in recognition. Korney could contain his

tears no longer, and wiping his eyes, nose and grey beard with the skirts of his coat, he turned from the dumb man and walked down the steps. He experienced a strange gentle, exalted feeling of submission—of humility before mankind, before his wife, before every one; the feeling tore at his heart with a paintul sweetness.

Marfa gazed out of the window and sighed with relief only when she saw the old man disappear round the corner of the house. When she was convinced that her man had really gone, she sat down by the loom and went on with her weaving. Ten times she struck the comb, but her hands refused to work. She stopped and tried to recall Korney as she had just seen him; she knew that it was he—the man who had loved and beaten her, and she was terrified at what she had done. She had done something she ought not to have done. But how ought she to have treated him? He did not say he was Korney and that he had come home again. And again she took up the shuttle and went on with her weaving until evening.

V

With difficulty Korney reached Andreyevka by nightfall and the Zinovyev's again took him in.

"You didn't go far, grandfather."

"I couldn't; I was too weak. I must go back the way I came, it seems. Can I stay the night?"

"You won't hurt the place, you know. Come and dry yourself."

The whole night Korney was racked by fever. Towards morning he dozed off, and when he awoke the house folk had all departed to their work, and Agafia alone remained in the hut.

He was lying on a dry coat the old woman had given him.

Agafia was taking the bread out of the oven.

"Come here clever child," Korney called to her in a feeble voice.

"In a minute, grandfather," she replied, putting down the bread. "Would you like something to drink? Some Kvas?"

He made no reply.

When she had put down the last loaf, she went to him with a jug of kvas. He did not turn to her or take the kvas, but lay on his back, his face turned upwards, and spoke without moving.

"Gasha," he said in a soft voice. "My time has come. I want to die; forgive me, for Christ's sake."

"God will forgive. You have never done me any harm."

He was silent.

"There is something more, my child. Go to your mother and tell her.... that the stranger, tell her.... the stranger of yesterday, tell her...."

He began to sob.

Have you been to our place, then?"

"Yes, yesterday. Tell her that the stranger of yesterday....the stranger, say...." Again his sobs

choked him, and at last, pulling himself together, he went on, "came to say goodbye to her," he said, and began fumbling for something in his bosom.

"I'll tell her, grandfather; I'll tell her. What are you looking for?" asked Agafia.

The old man was silent; convulsed with the effort, he pulled a piece of paper out of his bosom with his emaciated hairy hand and held it up to her.

"There, give this to whoever asks for it—my soldier's ticket. Thank God I have unburdened myself of my sins." His face assumed an expression of ecstasy. He raised his brows, fixed his eyes on the ceiling and became still.

"A candle," he said without moving his lips.

Agafia understood. She took a small piece of wax candle from the ikon and gave it to him. He seized it with his thumb.

Agafia went to put away his ticket in a box, and when she returned, the candle had fallen out of his hand and the light had gone out of his stony eyes and the breath from his bosom. Agafia crossed herself, blew out the candle, took a clean towel and covered his face.....

The whole of that night Marfa could not sleep and lay thinking of Korney. In the morning she put on her coat, covered her head with a shawl and went out to learn what had become of the stranger of yesterday. She had not gone far when she learned

that the old man was in Andreyevka. Marfa took a stick and set off for Andreyevka. The farther she walked the greater her fears grew. "We will forgive each other; I will bring him home and we will free ourselves of our sin. Let him at least die in his own home, near his son," she thought.

When Marfa neared her daughter's house a large crowed was gathered outside. Some stood in the passage, others by the window. Every one knew that the rich, famous Korney Vasiliev, who forty years ago had cut a figure in the place, had died as a poor wanderer in the house of his daughter. The hut, too, was full of people. The women whispered among themselves, sighing and shaking their heads.

When Marfa entered the hut they made way for her. Beneath the ikon she saw the body, washed and laid out and covered with a towel, and Philip Konovitch, who could read, was chanting the Slavonic words of the psalter in the manner of the deacon.

It was too late to forgive or to beg forgiveness, and from Korney's impassive, dignified old face it was impossible to know whether he had forgiven or was still nursing his wrongs.

NOTES AND EXERCISES

ISWARAN

R.K. Narayan is one of the leading Indian writers of English today. He has written novels and short stories. His most well-known novels are *The Bachelor of Arts* and *The Dark Room*. His short stories are available in three collections, *Dadu and other Stories*, *Malgudi Days* and *An Astrologer's Day and other Stories*.

Narayan belongs to Mysore and naturally most of his stories have South Indian setting. He is the master of creating atmosphere and conjuring up scenes steeped in Mysore life and spirit. By realistic touches and lively details, he creates the impression of verisimilitude and his pictures are all true to life. He has a gift of phrase and a quaint sense of humour which make all his work interesting.

Iswaran depicts a scene with which every Indian student is familiar, the scene of the declaration of university results and all the stir and excitement that attaches thereto. There is nothing uncommon about the groups that go about excited, their anxiety and expectation, their joys and their sorrows. But there is a great deal uncommon about the hero of the story. Here is a youngman who has become 'aged in the Intermediate class', till even his parents have lost hope and even sympathy for him. 'His results are famous and known to every one in advance', they say. The whole family laughs at him and treats him as a 'thick-skinned idiot'. They think that he is indifferent to his result. He goes to the cinema when everyone else goes to the Senate Hall. But behind this outward pose, there is an extremely sensitive heart which is 'seared by failure, desperately longing and praying for success'. That is why when success comes to him, he becomes insane. A sensitive mind crushed by long-recurring failure, embittered by the contempt of the world, even of his own family including his parents, tortured by the mask of indifference that he has been assuming for years, already predisposed to suicide, finds that he has unexpectedly secured a second class and is shattered. He has achieved the impossible and cannot contain himself for joy. He imagines that he is a king and orders his Prime Minister

to bring five hundred and one horses (that was his Roll Number). The rest follows as a natural consequence.

This is a story of situation as almost all Narayan's stories are. The scene is that of the most exciting day in a student's life, when his result is declared. In that scene is placed a peculiar type of a boy whom we have described above.

More than that, perhaps, it is a story of character. The whole art of the author lies in depicting realistically the reaction of that particular scene on that particular character. Success in the second division is a common affair indeed and does not turn people mad. But the success of Iswaran is not a common affair and Iswaran is not an ordinary boy. You have to accept the premises—the situation and the environment on the one hand and the personality of Iswaran on the other—and then if you feel that things must happen as they do in the story, the author has succeeded. He has given us a true picture of life.

——o——

Malagudi : a town in Southern India. The author belongs to Mysore and naturally places most of his scenes there.

Sarayu : a river in Southern India.

Senate Hall : the building where the offices of the University are located.

Optimist : one who looks at the bright side of things.

Thick-skinned : insensitive; animals have a thick skin and do not feel the effect of the probe.

Supercilious : contemptuous, assuming superiority.

EXERCISES

1. "But all this was only a mask. Under it was a creature hopelessly seared by failure, desperately longing and praying for success". Illustrate this from the story.
2. What kind of a boy was Iswaran ?
3. Either justify the end of the story or say how you would like to have ended it.
4. What happended to Iswaran when he found that he had passed the Intermediate examination ?
5. How far is Iswaran to blame for his tragedy ?

THE SALT INSPECTOR

Prem Chand (1880—1936) is one of the most popular story-writers of modern India. He was certainly a poineer. A disciple of Gandhiji, who gave up his job to join the Non-cooperation Movement, he is imbued with a spirit of reform and patriotism, though he does not allow it to gain the upper hand of his art. His stories are delightful reading for their own sake and whatever moral attaches to them is kept subordinate. He writes mostly about the poor, down-trodden, Indian villagers, their joys and sorrows, their superstition and credulity, their poverty and ignorance. And he always writes with sympathy and tolerance. His aim is not to ridicule but to uplift them. He exposes their faults to educate them. He protests against their exploitation to bring about a better state of society.

Prem Chand writes with utmost sincerity and directness, but, with all that, he remains objective, which is very difficult for a reformer to be. He never protrudes on the scene and allows the story to unfold itself. He himself remains hidden behind his characters.

Prem Chand is realistic. He presents a true picture of the Indian life, especially that of the poor. He seldom exaggerates. He never becomes fanciful. He is steeped deep into his surroundings and can depict them with courage and skill. He can read the inmost thoughts and feelings of an Indian villager and can interpret them with an accuracy and vividness that are surprising.

Prem Chand is full of pathos and his pathos, as it mostly happens, is tinged with humour. The lords of tears are very often also the lords of smiles. If he can deeply sympathise with the lot of the poor and the miserable, he can laugh with them in that innate simple, unpolished sense of humour that is characteristic of a villager. Even when he laughs at them, he makes his characters not small and contemptible, but all the more loveable. That is called creative humour. He identifies himself completely with them and partakes of their joys and sorrows.

The Salt Inspector is a story about bribery and corruption which Prem Chand saw all about him. Its main theme is a struggle

between wealth and duty. Duty, in the person of Munshi Vanshi Dhar, wins against wealth in the person of Pandit Alopi Din at the Jumna Bridge. The tables are soon turned and wealth gains victory at the court. But defeat sometimes is more honourable, more powerful than victory and Alopi Din, probably stung by remorse, or more probably tempted by greed, comes as a suppliant to ask for the services of Vanshi Dhar as the Manager of his property.

It is a scene of smuggling and contraband trade. It depicts how, with the lure of gold, the officers are tempted and the laws distorted. It is a scene that we see every day around us and it is drawn with a simplicity and directness that is typical of Prem Chand.

God-given commodity : i.e. salt.

Contraband trading : Smuggling.

Zuleikha : A queen of Egypt who fell in love with Yusuf in a dream and ultimately married him.

Majnoo : The lover of Laila. His real name was Qais Amri. It is an Arabian love story.

Farhad : the lover of Shirin, the wife of the king of Persia named Parvez. It is said that he dug a canal of milk out of the mountain Baiton. Hence he is called Koh-kan, the digger of mountain.

Nala and Neela : the two engineers who helped Rama to build the bridge to connect India with Ceylon.

Pir : Preceptor, guru.

Siren voices : Charms. Sirens were the sea-nymphs in Greek mythology who charmed sailors with their songs.

Mess of pottage : material conforts. This is a phrase from the Bible which has provided hundreds of phrases to the English languages.

Duty spurning riches : an honest person not accepting bribe.

On the juridical battle-field : in the law-suit.

Innuendo : Oblique, usually depreciatory, remark.

Rameshwaran and Jagan-nath : places of pilgrimage for the Hindus.

Pale into insignificance : become unimportant.

NOTES AND EXERCISES.

EXERCISES.

1. What advice did his father give to Munshi Vanshi Dhar ?
2. "Duty-trampled wealth under its foot." Illustrate it from the story you have read.
3. Give the character of Alopi Din.
4. Describe the court scene.
5. Is this story typical of Indian life ? Can you narrate any other similar incident ?

THE STORY-TELLER

H.H. Munro (1870-1916) wrote under the pen name of Saki and his stories have a charm, delicacy and grace that are associated with the cup-bearer of Persian poetry. There is an urbanity and lightness about his work that eludes grasp, let alone criticism. It is to be read and enjoyed, not to be talked and written about. It charms you invisibly ; your mind is gently touched; you become a little different. But you are unable to say what it is due to. You cannot put it into words. There is an airy delicacy, a quaint grace, about him. When you have finished his story, you feel it slipping from you. There are no dramatic incidents. You cannot relate it to your neighbour. But it leaves a mood, a suffusing fragrance. You can shut your eyes and just enjoy that mood and fragrance.

Saki's stories are short and deal with ordinary situations. He has no need to hunt for dramatic scenes or high-strung, emotional incidents. His characters are of every-day life ; they are perfectly natural and never indulge in hyperbole or extravagance. They speak simple, plain and precise language. Economy of effect is one of Saki's great qualities. He never wanders. Every word and every incident is relevant and in its proper place.

Saki has a subtle sense of humour which is most often satiric, But the satire is gentle and urbane. He knows no bitterness, no sting, Since he is not after reform, he never becomes irritable or petulant. Here and there, there may be an impish mischief about

him, but it is innocent and delightful. He urbanity and lightness never allow his sarcasm to stick; it is a gentle ripple that passes on.

We feel sure that the reader will be tempted to read more and more of Saki's stories. We can recommend any of the following collections—*Reginald, Reginald in Russia* and *Beasts and Super Beasts.* It is rather difficult to make a choice among the stories, but if we must, we should like to name *The Open Window, Dusk, The Mouse, The Reticence of Lady Anne.*

The *Story-teller* is one of Saki's typical stories. It it an ordinary scene in a railway compartment, where children, defiant of their old, churchy aunt as all children are, are making noise and asking persistent questions, which no old aunt, churchy or otherwise, can satisfactorily answer. She tries the trick of a story which like all churchy stories proves dull and insipid for the children. A stranger is watching this scene and allures the children with an extremely unchurchy story, much to the delight of the children and annoyance of the aunt. This is an extremely ordinary situation, typical of everyday travel in a railway compartment, but it is treated with a charm and delicacy which is subtle and intangible. There is no dramatic incident, only a situation which evokes so much. It brings before us a pleasant clash between nephews and nieces who want to have delight and the aunt who wants to impart instruction. It is a study of child psychology which the stranger undestands better than the aunt. The story is throughout permeated with humour, light and urbane.

Emphatically : making their presence felt by noise.

The frown :...scowl : He was getting more and more annoyed.

Created a diversion : turned the attention from the topic.

On the Road to Mandalay : A well-known poem by Kipling.

Communication Cord : chain to stop the train.

Bristled : grew angry.

Milk puddings, jamtarts : children dislike milk puddings, but love jamtarts,

Pinafore : child's washable covering to protect the frock etc. from dirt.

EXERCISES

1. Give the character of the aunt ? Is it typical ?
2. Why could not the aunt keep the children quiet ?
3. How did the children react to the story of the aunt ?
4. Give the story that the stranger told the children ?
5. Why did the children get interested in the stranger's story ?

MY FAIR NEIGHBOUR.

Tagore (1861-1941) is admittedly the greatest writer of modern India. A poet, a dramatist, a novelist, a short-story writer, a composer, a philosopher, an educationist, his versatility is amazing. Brought up in an aristocratic, saintly, family, he imbibed the love of life and letters, the religious almost mystic view of life and the worship of beauty that is a joy for ever. His radiance and optimism is catching. His exuberant spirit, his overflowing energy and his love of life give a throbbing soul to all his work.

Tagore is sometimes called the Shelley of India. He is Shelley and Keats in one. He has the love of the sky as well as the love of the earth. His beauty is both earthly and ethereal. He dwells in the heavenly regions and yet his feet are firmly planted on the ground. He loves clouds and he loves flowers. He loves the ideal and he loves the actual. He loves the heavenly angels and he loves the earthly women. He has Shelley's devotion to philosophy and Keats's devotion to beauty. And above all, he is an artist first and last. In his literary work, he never allows his philosophy to win the upper hand of his art. His philosophy permeates his art as fragrance permeates a flower. It is blended and fused. It never protrudes out. Its value lies not in what it says, or even how it says it, but in what it is, just as the value of a flower lies not in its colour or fragrance or the arrangement of petals, bnt in the flower itself.

Tagore has his roots in the Upnishads. His background is deeply religious and spiritual. He has a firm basis and a con-

fident, radiant point of view. His love of country, though deep, is not narrow. He loves humanity and he loves God. He has no partialities and no prejudices whatever. His art embraces the whole universe and goes beyond.

His most well-known works are *Gitanjali, Gardener, Sadhana, Gora* and *Personality.*

Besides these, he has written a number of short stories included in *Hungry Stones and other Stories* and *Mashi.* His stories have a poetic atmoshpere and point of view. They always reveal a new light and present a charmingly romantic picture. *My fair neighbour* idealises love. The narrator's love for the widow is Shelleyan. "She was like a dewdrenched *sephali*-blossom.....Too radiant and holy for the flower-decked marriage-bed, she had been dedicated to Heaven". Shelley might have written that about Emilia. Nabin's winning of the widow's heart through poems is extremely romantic. Both the friends live and move in a dreamy, imaginative almosphere where there is no dust and no vulgarity. It is a beautiful charming world where you can talk of love and poetry, where you can worship beauty silently and feel happy. It is a poet's world altogether.

Tagore writes prose like poetry. Every page of his is full of poetic similies and metaphors. His thinking is metaphorical. Things appear to him as pictures as they appeared to Keats and get crytallised in deeply poetic phrases, complete and rounded like Keats's. Even in prose he thinks and writes like a poet. "Passion is like a mountain stream, and refuses to be enclosed in the place of its birth; it must seek an outlet". "Like a hen brooding on a duck's egg, I lavished all the warmth of my pent-up passion on Nabin's effusions". "Reality represses the flow of feeling like a rock; imagination cuts out a path for itself". etc.

Desecrate : make profane, pollute.

Was afflicted with a madness of verse : started writing poems. A poet is often called mad and poetry, 'harmonious *madness*', fine *frenzy.*'

Reverential delicacy : grace and worship.

NOTES AND EXERCISES

Vicarious poems : poems written for another.

Eleventh moon : the eleventh day of the moon is a day of fasting and penance, *ekadashi*.

Artistic susceptibilities : poetic sensibilities.

EXERCISES.

1. What kind of feelings did the narrator of the story have for the widow ? How did he express them ?
2. How did Nabin win the heart of the widow ?
3. Is it a convincing story ? Could things happen as they did ?
4. Why did the narrator of the story swear at the end ?
5. "Tagore writes prose like a poet." Pick out some of the poetic expressions in the story.

THE NECKLACE

Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893) is decidedly one of the greatest short-story writers of the world, though he is much more besides. In all he has written some thirty volumes, which include novels and poetry.

Maupassant's greatest quality is objectivity which is almost Shakespearean. He observes without prejudice and reports without partiality. He does not come between the story and the reader. The story tells itself. The action, and not the writer, reveals character. There is no philosophy or ethics about him. He does not exhort ; he exhibits. He has no wrongs to right, no rights to vindicate. There is no " purpose" behind his work, no "palpable design". His world is peopled with all sorts of characters ; he himself is not there. He completely obliterates his own personality. He has no deep philosophy, no theories of art, no moral or social prejudices, no wealth of ideas. He is not profound or exhaustive. He is simple and naive. He goes on describing gently, sometimes even mercilessly, what he observes about him. All he says is, "Look" ; he does not care to decide whether it is good or bad. He leaves that to the reader and passes on. That makes him one of the most enthralling of writers. He never talks *at* the reader ; he never irritates him.

Maupassant is full of pathos, but there is no sentimentality about him. He is one of the most dispassionate of writers. He is a man of wide sympathy and limitless tolerance. He does not commend the good or condemn the bad. Since he has no ethics to preach, he treats of the saints and the sinners with equal sympathy, "It seems to me", says Joseph Conrad, "that he looks with an eye of profound pity upon the troubles, deceptions and miseries of mankind".

His stories depend for their effect on their plots which, though simple, are always significant. Out of the flimsiest material, he can, with consummate skill, spin out a most delightful story. He deals with middle-class French-men and women, with their ordinary everyday thoughts and interests. There is nothing vague or indefinite about him. He is direct and precise, never fulsome or verbose. His strength depends on the economy both of incident and of language. There is a restraint and accuracy about everything that he writes. "Strength, flexibility, proportion", say Anatole France, "nothing is lacking in this robust and masterly story teller. He is consummate in his art".

The Necklace is one of his most famous stories and has been translated in many languages. It is the story of an ordinary middle-class family where the wife who possesses both beauty and charm is unhappy because she has no means to exhibit them—no jewels or ornaments, no beautiful dresses. She borrows a diamond necklace from a friend to attend a party and loses it. Then follow all her privations and miseries. She works like a labourer, washing the dirty plates and the dirty linen till in ten years the debt incurred to buy another necklace is paid off. But she loses youth; charm and beauty, of which she was so proud. With a masterly skill, Maupassant introduces "surprise" at the end when she is told that the necklace was of imitation and not of real diamonds, worth five hundred and not thirty six thousand francs.

There is tragic irony about the story—about the woman who "suffered endlessly, feeling herself born for every delicacy and luxury". A beautiful and charming woman, she dreams of aristocratic life and yet, through her own fault, is reduced to extreme poverty and misery. It is a simple situation but how pathetic! In

ten years she becomes unrecognisably old. She has neither the time nor the mind to do her hair or iron her skirts. Whenever she gets time, she sits down by the window and thinks of "that evening long ago, of the ball at which she had been so beautiful and so much admired".

"What would have happened if she had never lost those jewels ? Who knows ? Who knows ? How strange life is, how fickle ! How little is needed to ruin or to save !"

Marriage portion : dowry.

Breton : From Brittany, in the North-West of France.

Oriental : of the East.

Murmured gallantries : whispered chivalrous talk.

Asparagas : a plant whose shoots are a table delicacy.

Seine : A river that runs through Paris.

Rue des Martyrs : A street in Paris.

Without volition or power of thought : unable to think.

Palais-Royal : A part of Paris.

Champse-Elysses : A fashionable part of Paris.

EXERCISES

1. What kind of life did Mathilde dream of ?
2. Give an account of Mathilde's preparation for and success at the party.
3. What privations did Mathilde suffer due to the loss of the necklace ?
4. How far does the story illustrate the proverb, "Man proposes, God disposes".
5. What quality in the story appeals to you most and why ?

THE BET

Anton Chekhov (1860-1904) is one of the greatest Russian dramatists and short-story writers. His most well-known plays are *The Cherry Orchard* and *The Three Sisters*. His collections of stories include *Particolourod Stories* and *Stories of Melpomene*.

Chekhov writes mainly about people of humble origin and

writes with wonderful realism and directness. No wonder there is mostly a sad note of frustration about his stories. "His story is always the story of the undoing of a life". He sees misery around him and does not hesitate to depict it as he sees it without gloss or colour. "The aim of fiction", he said in one of his letters, "is absolute and honest truth". He gives us the picture of the life of common, ordinary people, their hum-drum existence, their stupidity and conservatism, their poverty and ignorance, with stark realism and often with subtle irony, but always with broad sympathy. He pities more than he condemns; but he never sacrifices truth for pity. "The merit of his books", said Tolstoy, "is that they are comprehensible and closely akin, not only to every Russian, but to every human being".

With this realism about the present, Chekhov combines hope for the future. He is not a pessimist. He is always cheerful, animated and optimistic about the future. "If winter comes, can spring be far behind ?"—that is the key-note of his work.

With this simplicity of theme, Chekhov fitly combines the simplicity and directness of treatment. There is an almost ascetic economy about his style and subject-matter. He never interposes description or moralising. He never indulges in embellishment and decoration. His great quality, in fact, is under-statement.

Chekhov is satirical especially when dealing with the intelligentzia whom he hates. But here also he does not lose his tenderness.

The Bet is a story about the intelligentzia with their greed and independent thinking. The "wild, ridiculous" bet is based on the greed of gold. It appears to be a simple jest but betrays pettiness and viciousness of both parties. There is a bitter cynicism about the whole business which revolts and disgusts the reader.

But Chekhov, with his sympathy and art, raises the situation to reveal the greatest depths of human mind. He presents an acute psychological study of how, under stress of solitude and suffering, a greedy mind is uplifted to a condition where everything appears to be "void, frail, visionary and delusive as a mirage". From the greedy bet to the laywer's last letter—is a huge step and through what trying stages his mind passes and is

ultimately purified ? It is a deeply revealing study of psychology under suffering.

As it should be in a short story, the author, with a masterly skill, presents the scene in the last few hours of a huge drama extending to fifteen years and reveals the past through the introspection of the banker.

Capital punishment : death sentence.

Obsolete : antiquated, out of date.

A Priori : reasoning from cause to effect.

Classics : works of recognised excellence by ancient authors.

Theology : the science of religion.

Stock-exchange : the place where stocks and shares are publicly bought and sold.

Speculation : investment in shares etc. that involves risk of loss, *sitta*.

Greenhouse : a glass shelter for rearing delicate plants.

Elbruz : the mountain that separates Iran from Turkman.

Mount Blanc : the highest peak of the Alps.

Sirens : sea-nymphs in Greek mythology who tempted sailors by their sweet songs.

Pan : the Greek god of forests who was fond of music.

EXERCISES

1. From the "wild, ridiculous bet", to the last, farewell letter of the laywer is a long step. Describe the various stages through which the laywer passes.
2. Do you think that the development of the laywer's mind is psychologically realistic ?
3. What do you think would have happened if in place of the lawyer there were an illiterate man.
4. Narrate some story to illustrate that small beginnings may sometimes have far-reaching consequences.
5. Compare the characters of the banker and the lawyer.

THE LADY OR THE TIGER ?

Frank R. Stockton (1834-1902) is one of those authors who win immortality by a single work. He is not among the front rank

story-writers, but his story *The Lady or the Tiger?* is certainly among the front-rank stories of the world. It has been translated into many languages and has always aroused discussion as it did at the time of its publication.

Stockton started as a journalist and passed on to writing novels and short stories. He is mostly known for his fantastic fables and stories for children included in *The Floating Prince and other Fairy Tales*. Even in his books for adults, he continued to make the same use of absurd situations that had made his juvenile stories popular. His fame, now, besides *The Lady or the Tiger?* rests on the whimsically fantastic novel, *Rudder Grange*.

The story in our selection has been called on enigmatic fantasy. It starts as fantasy. It is a queer king with a queer sense of justice that the author presents before us. He is semibarbarous and autocratic so much so that he can turn all his "varied fancies into facts". His "poetic justice" of both reward and punishment is purely a matter of chance. Guilty or not, an accused may be devoured by a hungry tiger or married to a charming woman. "It mattered not that he might already possess a wife and family, or that his affections might be engaged upon an object of his own selection". That is the interesting fantastic situation that is presented before us.

But it is not the fantasy that appeals to the reader; it is the enigma - the enigma of the princess whether she should throw her lower into the jaws of the most ferocious tiger or into the arms of the most charming woman - whether she should destory her lover and consequently herself at a single stroke or be slowly consumed by a hundred thousand pangs of jealousy. There is no phantasy about it. It is a universal human enigma. It is not only the heart of that 'hot-blooded, semi-barbarous' princess that has to decide; it is every heart that throbs in a man's or a woman's bosom. It is a psychological problem which every readers has to decide for himself. Most readers have failed to decide it—that is the whole charm of the story. It does not finish when you come to the end of it; it begins and stays with you for hours and days. You revert to it again and again, discuss it from all angles and yet leave it undecided. It is this literary

puzzle based on human psychology that has made the story charming and its author immortal.

Latin neighbours . the neighbours who follow Roman customs and speak one of the languages descended from Latin (the language of ancient Italy) i.e. French, Spanish, Portugese, Italian etc.

Turned his varied fancies into facts . put into effect all kinds of his whims.

Rhapsodies : extravagant utterances.

Gladiators : men trained to fight with swords etc. at ancient Roman shows.

Conflict between religious opinions and hungry jaws : In the days of early christianity, non-christains were thrown to the hungry lions in the public arena.

Poetic justice : ideal justice as shown in poems etc.

Every barley-corn a king : every inch a king, a king in every respect. Barley-corn, from the length of the grain, also means half-an-inch as length of measure.

Amphitheatre : a circluar structure with rising seats and a central open space. Ancient Roman shows, contests etc. were held in amphitheatres.

Epithalmic measure : marriage song.

Tribunal : court of justice.

Conventional hero of romance : typical hero of a love story.

Fateful portals : why are the gates called 'fateful ?'

EXERCISES

1. What was the function of the arena built by the king?
3. Give a character-sketch of the king.
3. The story "involves a study of the human heart". How far do you agree ?
4. Who do you think came out of the door, the lady or the tiger ? Discuss.
5. Discuss the "situation" in this story.

THE MAGIC SHOP

H.G. Wells (1866-1946) was a novelist, sociologist, historian, Utopian and a short-story writer. Impelled by want, he worked incessantly and wrote nearly fifty novels, the best-known among them being, *The Time Machine, Love and Mr. Levisham, Kipps, Tono Bungay* and *Mr. Pally.* The last one is said to be his masterpiece.

Wells was fundamentally a man of ideas, like Shaw, and created men and women to express those ideas. He was impatient of art, pure and simple. He saw the intellctual poverty of modern life, its mouldering traditions, its blind passions, its dead inertia and he was inspired with a zeal for reform. "Let us plan our future and at all costs get our best men in the upper deck. We must get rid of the dead weight of the middle." His "Outline of History" was written as a step towards bringing about the future world-state with which he was obsessed. He wanted to get out of "the strange advertising civilisation of which London is the centre." He foresaw a future in which there would be "brotherhood through sorrow, sorrow for common suffering and irreparable mutual injuries."

More than his ideas, Wells is remembered for scientific fiction. He postulates an invention and builds interesting but logical structure on it. A man loses weight or becomes invisible or acquires thousand-fold energy. What will be the consequences ? In Wells' pages, the most fantastic becomes the most real. The future that he imagines does not look fanciful and absurd, but the natural evolution of the present. His scientific speculations are very acute and powerfully grip the reader's imagination.

That does not mean that he had no interest in characters. If it were so, he could not make artistic use of scientific ideas. He had a subtle insight into human mind. His character are not mere puppets ; they are differentiated and are drawn with delicate insight. Nor, even in his wildest fantasy, does he lose sight of human factor—the underlying human significance. Throughout all these tales,, the immense possibilities of science, the power of outside forces and the futility of human effort are emphasised.

The Magic Shop is pure fantasy. It describes some of the most

queer and eccentric tricks of a conjuror. But the whole fantasy is made real. We never for a minute imagine that we are in some grotesque or fanciful place. It appears that the shop is round the corner where we can enter any day at will. Shopping goes on there as if it were a grocery or fruit shop. The details given make it real and life-like. It reminds one of Coleridge's art of making supernatural natural. In fact the way both the father and the son react to some of the tricks shows how well the author has succeeded. It a complete "suspension of disbelief." When the shopman vanishes, they stare at each other with amazement. The father finds the magic "a little too genuine" for his taste and at times feels nervous. The long flexable nose of the assistant appears to him "like a thing in a nightmare." He does not want Gip to see it. The climax comes when Gip himself is made to vanish and the father is frightened. "Stop this folly," he says, "Where is my boy ?"

Ventriloquist : one who speak in a manner that the voice appears to come from a different source.

Incubators : apparatus for hatching birds.

Circus : Oxford Circus is the most fashionable part of London. Regent Street, Oxford Street, Holborn are all situated there.

Prancing precedence: In a toy shop, Gip would have been elated and led the conversation.

Legerdemair ; jugglery.

Egotist : self-conceited, selfish.

Whited sepulchres : fair from outside but hedious from within like a white-washed grave.

Knight-errants : medieval knights wandering in search of chivalrous adventures.

Prestidigital fellow : juggler.

Trust Magnate : Wealthy person in charge of a property.

Stoicism : fortitude, indifference. Zeno, the Greek philosopher, taught the philosophy of indifference to pleasure and pain. Since he taught it in a porch (*stoa* in Greek), he teaching became known as stoicism.

EXERCISES.

1. Describe some of the tricks that Gip and his father saw at the

Magic shop. Which one appears to you to be the most interesting ?

2. Compare the effect that the tricks had on the father and the son.
3. Describe some of the magic tricks that you may have seen.
4. How far is the epithet 'geunine' applied to the Magic Shop correct ?
5. Account for your liking or disliking of this story.

A HARLEM TRAGEDY

O. Henry (1867--1910) whose real name was William Sydney Porter was a born writer. Even as a boy, he had the call of the pen on him and he joined the staff of a newspaper. He lived to write some six hundred complete stories, from which it is difficult to choose. Prof. Leacock calls him "one of the greatest masters of modern literature". Henry James said that his work was "all treated with the skill a Maupassant and a humour Maupassant never dreamt of." That is no small praise. Humour, in a fact is his outstanding quality, ironic, mellow humour which delights the reader. He is often classed with Saki in that respect. Both are instinctive story-tellers Both have an exquisite lightness of touch and a soft gentle humour, often blended with irony. E.V. Lucas at one place describes a perfect hostess as one who puts by the guest-room bed "a volume either of O. Henry or Saki or both".

Having passed through trials and tribulations, having spent three years in jail on a charge of embazzlement, O. Henry came to have a tender heart for the poor and the unlucky. A quiet, unassuming man, who shunned limelight, he is gentle and mellow in his treatment of society and its manners. There is not the least sting in him. He is full of fun, ironic but not bitter, brilliant but not boisterous.

O. Henry is known for his skill in plot-construction, the strongest point of which the twist that he gives at the end of the story. He provides an element of surprise, which is the pleasure of art. This "twist" ending, this unexpected turn, is characteristic of most

of his stories. It provides a sort of anti-climax and leaves you in a mood that not only stays but takes you backwards and forwards in the story. This trick of twisting the story's tail, so to say, and springing a surprise in the last sentence has won him hundreds of lovers and admirers.

O. Henry writes mostly about New York and is the master of the dialect and the slang, which make his stories juicy and delightful.

Along with Saki and Maupassant, we should strongly like to commend this author to our readers. His best-known collections of stories are *Cabbages and Kings*, *Sixes and Sevens*, and *The Four Millions* and some of his best stories, if we must choose from among them, are *The Gift of the Magi*, *A Muncipal Report*, *An Unfinised Story*, *A Black-jack Bargainer*, *A Lick penny Lover*, *Mammon and the Archer*, *Two Thanks giving Day Gentlemen*.

A Harlem Tragedy illustrates all O. Henry's qualities. It is full of fun which consists in the contrasted life of the two families. Mrs. Cassidy has a husband who gives her kicks and soon after kicks, kisses and chocolate-cream and she loves it. Mrs. Fink, her neighbour, on the other hand, has a husband who is "too much of a gentleman ever to raise his hand against me". She feels envious. "My Mart never hit me a lick in his life...He comes in grouchy and and ain't got a word to say. He never takes me out anywhere. He's a chair-warmer at home for fair. He buys me things, but he looks so glum about that I never appreciate 'em". She feels that her life is montonous and has no pep in it. She, like her neighbour, desires "the lover's pinch that tickles as it hurts." She makes up her mind to annoy her husband when he comes home, so that he should give her a licking and then out of remorse buy her a silk dress and take her to pictures.

"You lazy loafer!" she begins "Must I work my arms off washing and boiling for the ugly likes of you. Are you a man or are you kitchen-maid."

Mr. Fink becomes "motionless from surprise", but does not stir. She then strikes him "fiercely in the face with her clenched hand. In that instant she felt a thrill of love for him such as she had not for many a day". Even that is not enough.

"Maggie caught him again on the jaw with a wide swing of her other hand. She closed her eyes in that fearful, blissful moment before his blow should come--she whispered his name to herself-she leaned to the expected shock, hungry for it".

Did the blow come ? O. Henry would not be O. Henry if it did.. When her neighbour who had heard the stumbling and the shuffling in their room runs up to enquire, "Oh, Maggie. Did he ? Oh, did he?", the reply comes in the last sentence, with that "surprise" and "twist" of which O. Henry is fond. "He—he never touched me, and—he's–Oh, Gawd—he's washin' the clothes-he's washin' the clothes.'

The delightful juice of the slang of which the story is so full can be appreciated by reading alone.

No Homeopathic one : not a small dose. She means that he beat her severely indeed. In homeopathic system, medicine is given in very small doses.

Cornelia : the mother of the famous tribunes, Tiberious and Gaius (2nd century B.C.) when a lady once made a show of her jewels at Cornelia's house and asked to see Cornelia's, the latter produced her two sons, saying, "They are my jewels".

Kiomono : loose upper garment.

Soprano : highest pitch.

Oxfords : kind of shoes.

It takes...good :———for stitching the wound, that is.

Full : tight.

Chairwarmer : one who keeps sitting on the chair.

Maori : native race in New Zealand.

Bornum and Bailey : the name of a theatre.

Ranged between plum duff and his hammock : plum duff is a kind of pudding ; hammock is a hanging bed on the ship. It means that he just sat and ate. The simile of a calm ship in the whole paragraph to describe her dull, monotonous life is beautiful indeed.

Shiver his timbers : an oath in seaman's language.

Delectable Isles : (from Pilgrime's Progress) delightful place.

Throw up the Sponge : The simile here changes from the sea to boxing. When the boxer admits defeat, he throws up the sponge used between rounds.

NOTES AND EXERCISES

The curse of domesticity : the misfortune of quiet, homely life.

Anaconda : a large snake.

Labour Day : the day celebrated by the Labour Party.

Prerogative : Birth right (of beating i.e.)

If he——duty : If he would not beat her, she must teach him to beat her.

He reposed——pudding : His married life was without any zest and charm.

Elysium : abode of the blessed after death in Greek mythology, state of ideal happiness.

Vicariously girdling the world in print : going about and studying the world not in reality but through the newspaper.

Junket : feast, pic-nic.

Need a sponge holder : want their wounds to be washed and dressed.

Under your hat : secret.

EXERCISES

1. Why was Mrs. Cassidy feeling happy when Mrs. Fink went to see her ?
2. What did Mrs. Fink do to enjoy the same kind of happiness ? Did she succeed ?
3. Compare the characters of Mr. Cassidy and Mr. Fink.
4. What kind of a home do you prefer, Mrs. Cassidy's or Mrs. Fink's and why ?
5. Do you agree that the story has become more lively by the use of dialect ? Pick out a few dialect expressions and show that they lose much of their charm by being translated into normal English.

IMPULSE

Conrad Aikens (1889-) is more a poet than a story-writer. For his poetry, he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1930. Like Stockton, he is not among the front-rank writers, though he became well-known with his very first book, *Earth Truimphant and*

other Tales in 1914. His other volumes of short stories are *costumes by Eros* (1928) and *Among Lost People* (1934).

Impulse in one of his great stories. It revolves round the idea as to how far one should follow one's impluses and how far one should control them. Control is the sign of civilisation as license, of barbarity. After a discussion at the bridge table on the nature of impulses, Michael Lowes who is gratified to find that everybody has the same impulses as he, stealing for instance or forcing oneself on a charming girl, he catches the first opportunity at a drug-store and pinches a *de lux* safety razor when an arm touches him from behind and the tragedy follows. He is then surprised to find that nobody is chivalrous enough to take the whole thing as a joke, as an experiment to try the truth or otherwise of the discussion, or as a sort of bet with his friends.

Behind all that, is a picture of human relationship—the relationship of Michael with his wife primarily and with his bridge friends. There is nothing surprising in this. He has already put himself in the wrong so far as his wife is concerned. He has not been supporting her and his son as he should. He has been "jumping his rents" and fleeing from place to place. Such a man has no business to waste his time on bridge. He has less business to tell lies to his wife to slip away for it. No wonder when he is in difficulties, his wife deserts him. She does not like to ruin the life of their child who is already known among his school-mates as the son of a thief,

The story has pathos. That is its main interest. It has also subtle humour. The way Michael hoodwinks his wife to stay out for the evening and the way he goes about stealthily at the drug-store evoke a smile. There is dramatic irony in his wife's words on the telephone :—"Are you sure you'll be home at all ?"

To do a new jump : to leave the place again.

Araks : an oriental liquor.

Pilaf : pilau, what we call *pulao*

Put in the first oar : started, made the first remark.

Highbrow : (slang)--A person of intellectual views on politics, literature etc.

Cock eyed :(slang) crooked.

Subway train : underground train called the tube.

NOTES AND EXERCISES

A Columbus of moral world: a discoverer of new moral values, one who experiments with moral actions.

Night- cap : the last alcoholic drink taken before going to bed.

Atomizer : an instrument for reducing liquids to fine sprays.

Percolator : an instrument for filtering liquids through.

De luxe : elegant, extra-fine.

Victim : here, the safety razor he wanted to steal.

Filigreed : of fine metal work.

Campact : small vanity case.

Slick : (Colloquial) clever.

Yanked :(Slang) pulled with a jerk.

Lowbrow : Antonym of high-brow.

Santy claus : Santa claus, person who fills children's stockings with christmas presents by night ; christmas rejoicings.

Subpoenaed summoned to court.

Jumped (his rent) : skipped over, failed to pay.

Went a little lark : had a little fun.

Fourth July : Day of American Independence.

EXERCISES

1. What discussion on impulses took place at the bridge table ?
2. Describe Michael 's visit to the drug-store.
3. Why was Michael's plea of the bet not acceptable to anybody ?
4. How far was Dora justified in suing for divorce ?
5. What place, if any, should the impulses have in life ?

THE JADE GODDESS

Tales have been told in China since history began. The earliest recovered stories date from the 3rd century B.C., though they began to be written in the 8th century A.D. They are surprisingly mature and are mostly about magic, chivalry and romance.

Emperor Jentsung (1023-1063) was very fond of stories and asked his courtiers to tell him one story every day. Two collections of these stories have been discovered and contain some of the best, though their authors are mostly unknown, *The Jade Goddess* is one of these stories. We know nothing more of its author, Chingpen T'ungshu, than his name.

The story has been translated into English by Lin Yutang along with others in his *Famous Chinese Short Stories*. It is not a mere translation ; it has been "retold" by Lin. The original story ends differently. There, Meilan is discovered by an officer and buried alive in a grave, but she appears as a ghost to wreak vengeance. This, according to Lin Yutang, was not consistent with the theme of the story. One wishes the translator had not taken that liberty and left the reader free to judge the original. Who knows the ancient artist had a better sense of his theme.

Lin Yutang is a famous Chinese author and philologist. Professor of Philology at Peiping University for some time, he has been collaborating to devise a plan for transcribing the Chinese language into Roman script. He has written a large number of books and is very popular in India. His most well-known books are *My Country and My People*, *The Importance of Living*, *Between Tears and Laughter* and *Wisdom of China and India*.

The Jade Goddess is a delicate, romantic story in tune with the delicate, romantic civilisation of ancient China. It traces the course of youthful passion, its rise and growth, its impetuousness leading to murder and elopement, its usual hide and seek and its ultimate tragic end. That is the usual course of all impetuous passion. The charm of the story lies in the choice that the artist has to make between art and life. Chang Po is hiding for murder. He can escape only if he gives up his unique art which will otherwise reveal his identity.

Meilan warns him again and again. "Do you think you should work at jade again ? Your work will be recognised and betray you". "Can't you change your trade—make lanterns or clay dolls as you used to do ?" "You must change your style. Don't do those extraordinary things. Just do well enough to bring in customers".

That sort of commercialisation is impossible for a great artist. He is not satisfied with anything but his best. "Do you want me to do cheap mediocre work ?" He asks in reply.

"Darling, I am worried", Meilan pleads again. "You are getting too well-known".

"We were nearly caught because you would not listen. Does jade mean so much to you ? More than your wife and baby ?"

It does to an artist. He lives for his art more than for his family. "Mud", he replies. "Why should I work with this when I can chisel jade". He is ultimately betrayed by art and has to flee. His child dies and his wife enters a convent, where she lives in a world of her own, writing prayer after prayer and burning it before the statue, till she dies twenty years later. Nothing is heard of Chang Po.

Sweet poignancy of the unattainable : There is pleasure in trying to attain what is out of reach and pain as well because it is out of reach.

Yangtze : a river in China.

Kaifeng, Kingse, Canton, Nanchang, Kian, Kanshein : They are cities in China.

Tragic irony of the situation : He needed to escape, but his own art would not allow him.

Prioress : senior officer of a religious house, next to abbess (similarly *prior*).

EXERCISES

1. "What Chang Po really had to escape from was not the police, but himself". How far is that true ?
2. Show how Chang Po sacrificed life for the sake of art.
3. What end can you imagine of Chang Po? Complete the story.
4. Give a character-sketch of Chang Po.
5. Give whatever Chinese elements you find in the story.

KORNEY VASILIEV

Tolstoy (1828-1910) was born in an aristocratic family. His father was a count and his mother a princess, though he lost them both before he was six and had to spend a sad, loveless childhood. Very early in his life, he faced that eternal conflict between the life of Nature and of reason, the life of pleasure and of moral law and he decided for the former. His early work is imbued with that spirit. He went so far as to write. "One should live so as to have the best for oneself and one's family". His greatest novels,

War and Peace and *Anna Karenina* belong to this period of spontaneous, instinctlve living.

But this could not last long. About 1876, he began to be obsessed with the fear of death and to study Christianity. "Ye resist not evil"—became his creed that stuck to him for life. He also saw the miseries of poor peasants and was filled with a missionary zeal to ameliorate their condition. He thus came to acquire a "peer-and-peasant view of life.

Most of his stories relate to the life of peasants in whom he sees all that is good and wise in life—instinctive love of truth, simplicity of mind and character, sympathy and follow-feeling as opposed to the conventional and sophisticated morality of the upper class. He was a severe critic of the Czarist rule and exposed the follies and foibles of aristocracy. Like Gandhiji, he identified himself with the poor people. He gave up all his property, including the copyright of his books and led the life of a simple peasant.

To describe the simple life of the peasants, he acquired a simple and direct style. Very often, he read out his stories to them and learnt appropriate phrases and expressions. His style is devoid of all decoration. It is clear and powerful like his thought.

Tolstory is prolific and versatile, Besides novels and short stories, he wrote on art, morals and social problems. He never believed in art for art's sake and his stories have some "purpose" behind them. They are "earthly stories with a heavenly meaning". With the advance of years, Tolstoy became more and more didactic.

Gandhiji learnt a great deal from him, during his compaign of Passive Resistance in South Africa. He even carried on correspondence with him for some time.

Korney Vasiliev is a peasant story, though the peasants here are comparatively rich. Their life is simple and innocent. Both Vasilievs and Zinovyevs are simple families, leading quiet and contented lives. Only peasants can be so hospitable as the Zinovyevs are to Korney who takes shelter with them in his misery. They look after him tenderly during his illness without knowing who he is. Agasha has not the slightest bitterness

in her against her father who had made her lame, beaten her mother and deserted them. "He is no stranger, you see ; after all he is my father".

Into such simple and contented life, enters the germ of jealousy, which develops into tragic consequences. It reminds us of *Othello*. To a mind full of suspicion.

"Trifles, light as air, Are, to the jealous, confirmations strong As proofs of holy writ".

Kusma poisons Korney's mind. Evestigny with whom Marfa's name had been associated before marriage has been employed as a labourer by her during his absence. Korney sees them talking in the verandah. That is enough to bring about the tragedy that follows.

It is a story of pathos unrelieved by the least tinge of humour. It is bleak and gloomy world, the only ray in it being the contentment and generosity of Zinovyev family. Korney dies of sorrow and misery ; Marfa does not die, but she cannot weave and she cannot sleep. Misery ennobles them both. "He experienced a strange, gentle and exalted feeling of submission of humility before manklnd, before his wife and before every one ; the feeling tore at his heart with painful sweetness".

Repentant and sorrowful, as Marfa hurries to seek Korney, she is thinking, "we will forgive each other ; I will bring him home and we will free ourselves of our sins".

Sleight : wheel-less carriage for driving over snow.

Ikon : a sacred figure of Greek church.

Verst : Russian measure of length (3500 feet).

Agasha, Agashka, Agafia : names of the same girl.

Kvas : Russian beer.

Slovanic : language of the slavs.

Psalter : the Book of Psalms.

Deacon: church officer below bishop and priest.

EXERCISES

1. Describe the scene in the bed-room before Korney left the house.
2. What sort of reception did Korney have at Zinovyevs ?
3. How did his wife receive Korney ?
4. This story is a 'tragedy of jealousy', What does that mean ? Narrate if you know any other story of that kind.
5. What Russian characteristics, if any, do you find in the story ?

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GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Which story in the selection that you have read do you like most and why?
2. Which story do you like least and why ?
3. Which is the best story from the point of view of plot ? Give reasons.
4. Which is the worst story from the point of view of plot ? Give reasons.
5. Which is the most well-drawn character in the whole book ?
6. Point out the story or stories which do not end as you would like them to. How would you end them ?
7. Compare the fantasy in *The Magic Shop* and *The Lady or the Tiger* ?
8. Do you find anything common in the two stories—*My fair Neighbour* and *The Jade Goddess* ?
9. Pick out the story whose interest depends on struggle. Describe the struggle.
10. Pick out the story whose interest depends on surprise. Describe the elemnt of surprise.
11. Who is more to blame in the following stories—the wife or the husband :—*The Necklace, A Harlem Tragedy, Impulse, Korney Vaisiliev.*
12. The following stories have deep psychological interest. Discuss it:—*Iswaran, The bet. The Lady on Tiger? The Jade Goddess,*
13. Pick out the story or stories that appeal to you for pathos. Discuss it.
14. Pick out the story or stories that appeal to you for humour. Discuss it.
15. Which story has the most dramatic beginning ? How ?
16. Which story has the most effective ending ? How ?
17. Which story is most true to life ?
18. Which story or stories illustrate the fact that man is not the master of his destiny ?
19. Can you improve upon the title of any story ?
20. Point out any story, if you can, which spoils the unity of effect. What would you like to omit in it ?